

The ART Quarterly

PUBLISHED BY THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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VOLUME V

NUMBER 3

SUMMER 1942

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VOL. V, NO. 3

THE ART QUARTERLY

SUMMER, 1942



*Fig. 1. THOMAS COLE, The Valley of the Vaucluse
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art*

THOMAS COLE AND THE ROMANTIC SENSIBILITY

By PARKER LESLEY

THOMAS COLE was born at the small midlands industrial town of Bolton le Moors, Lancashire, on February 1, 1801, the son of James Cole, a woolen manufacturer, and Mary Cole. Among numerous children he was the only boy, and the seventh in line of birth. His childhood must be pieced together from autobiographical fragments: judged by our standards, it could not have been an altogether happy one. His father's business failed, and the family moved to Chorley in Nottinghamshire, from whence, at the age of nine, Thomas was sent to school at Chester.¹ Unsatisfied and unhappy at school, he returned to Chorley, where he apprenticed himself as an engraver of designs in a calico-print manufactory. Even at this early period his recreations were wandering through the near-by woods, alone or in the company of his sister Sarah, and the reading of poetry. A short interval in Liverpool, just previous to the family's voyage to America, was spent as a professional engraver. What circumstances led the Cole family to emigrate to the United States can only be surmised. They were, however, probably no different from those which impelled thousands of other post-revolutionary settlers. Industrial centralization, the social exhaustion following the Napoleonic wars, the Corn Laws and Enclosure Bills, the irresistible attraction of new lands, freer ways, and less taxation, must all have been factors. In any case, the family arrived in Philadelphia on the 3rd of July, 1818. On September 24th, with all their possessions in a wagon drawn by two horses, they set out for Steubenville, Ohio.² Thomas accompanied his people part way, and then returned to Philadelphia to continue his work as an engraver of illustrations for Bunyan's *Holy War*. On January 4th, 1819, in company with his roommate, he made a voyage to the island of St. Eustacia in the West Indies. Some years later, in a story published in *The Saturday Evening Post*,³ he recalled the effect of that voyage:

When man in his wanderings sees the rocky towers of a mighty mountain, springing in awful dignity from the bosom of a wide and unfathomable ocean, he acknowledges the majesty of nature—and when his venturous eye penetrates the gloom of some deep and secluded valley, over whose secret depths the twilight spreads a veil of dim obscurity, he ponders upon the silence and secrecy of her workings.

This is essentially the same point of view as that of Wordsworth, when he

speaks of his own reaction to a similar setting:

... For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air, ...⁴

Yet a difference is immediately apparent, and not altogether the difference due to Wordsworth's genius and Cole's (so far as his literary work goes) artless clichés. Such a passage as

... And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime ... etc.

is veritable inspiration, but Cole's thought, though nearly identical, is expressed in the nineteenth century equivalent of journalese. The latter proceeds from the former in spirit; it has become, not commonplace, but conventional.

This identity between Wordsworth's natural communion and Cole's ardent sympathy might be a little further analyzed. During his youth in England, Cole undoubtedly had been conditioned to romantic nature through his reading, though such nature as is described by the English poets does not exist, at least in its poetic grandeur, in the local landscape. Nature in English romantic poetry is patently exaggerated; the landscape of

... The immeasurable height,
Of woods decaying, never to be decay'd,
The stationary blasts of water-falls,
And everywhere along the hollow rent
Winds thwarting winds, bewilder'd and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that mutter'd close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them ...⁵

was the outcome of hyperbole rather than actuality. In America, on every hand, literal illustrations of such descriptions could be found, and the youth whose sensibilities were already biased toward such experiences might be

expected to react strongly to whatever touched a familiar literary allusion.

At the end of the summer, 1819, Cole set out to join his family in Steubenville, where his sisters had set up a "female Seminary"⁶ and where his father was engaged in printing wall-papers.⁷ Here he occupied himself by teaching drawing and music in his sister's school.⁸ His contact with an itinerant face-painter by the name of Stein, who started him on a professional career, is well known; in 1822, thinking that he might support himself at this business he set off for St. Clairsville, Zanesville, and Chillicothe to pursue his newly adopted livelihood. This journey was hardly a success: he lived in actual want, and for few portraits received more than board and lodging. Returning to Steubenville he painted scenery for the Thespian Club, whose performances included *Jane Shore*, *Pizarro*, *Speed the Plow*, and *Fortune's Frolic*.⁹ His father's business, owing to competition, had failed, and the family removed to Pittsburgh. Cole followed them there in 1823, and, their situation being little better than Ohio, returned to Philadelphia in November of that year. This, as he himself rightly says, was the "winter of my discontent." He painted Japan-ware and transparencies, the portrait of a corpse as well as landscapes, and drew when time permitted from casts in the academy. In 1825, he moved to New York, where his brother-in-law, Dr. Ackerly, also formerly of Steubenville, had settled, and in this year his career as a painter begins.

Through the good offices of B. W. Bruen, Trumbull, Durand, Dunlap, and others, he received commissions for landscapes, which, though modest in price, were enough to support him. In the Spring of 1826 he was a member of the group which founded the National Academy of the Arts of Design, and the Academy's first exhibition, held at the corner of Broadway and Reed Street, contained three of his canvases. From the outset he was encouraged by critics. One, in reviewing the exhibition,¹⁰ wrote:

If I could get to the ears of *certain* persons, I would say, 'Spare, now, a sofa—and if you will still be selfish, go to Ingham, or Jarvis, and get your own head painted, and gaze on *that* instead of horse hair and mahogany—it will be worthier occupation, and a more beautiful object. But if you can so far prevail with yourself, go further, and get a landscape from Cole, or Wall, or Doughty, . . . it won't cost you half as much as a new carpet, or a dinner, or a ball, or a pair of horses, and will last much longer.'

Tiring of city life, he moved to Catskill in 1826, from whence he wrote one of his earliest patrons, Gulian Crommeln Verplanck:¹¹

I am surrounded with scenery of the finest kind; on one side I have the broad Hudson with its cultivated shores, on the other the majestic Catskill

mountains rise (at pleasing distance), ever changing in colour light and shadow—lower and near is a varied country through which meanders the Catskill Creek [,] a beautiful stream which rises in the mountains. The herbage is particularly fine, and there are some good trees in the neighbourhood. I ought to improve with all these advantages . . .

He continued to live there until 1829, making trips to the White Mountains, to Windham, and to Niagara, taking notes and making sketches, continually impressed by the grandeur of the wilderness.

The heaped waters are tossed in lofty foaming billows like the surge of the ocean, but are far more dreadful; there is no regularity in motion, no gentle sweep of waves—but tumultuous dashing (clashing?) together, foaming and tortured, their roar is heard for miles. Dante might have got some grand ideas for his *Inferno* had he seen these rapids.¹²

In June, 1829, he embarked on his first trip to Europe. As the formative years of his life had been passed on the frontier and in the cities, he was an American by conviction. This journey might well have had the same effect had he been born in Steubenville, for it was his first taste of galleries, of London, Paris, Rome, of antiquity and the artist-life of the Continent. He went armed with letters to some famous people, including Sir Thomas Lawrence, who admitted him hospitably to his circle; he exhibited, with only slight success, at the Royal Academy of 1829. He remained in London, "painting unremittingly," as he wrote Thomas Cummings, until May, 1831, when he set off on his tour of the Continent. The effect of the first European trip we will treat of in more detail later on; suffice it to say that he covered Italy thoroughly, even for an American romantic, before he returned in October, 1832. The next six years were a continuation of his residence in Catskill. A major production of this period was *The Course of Empire*, originally intended as decoration for a room in the residence of Luman Reed. A second trip to Europe in 1841, a sojourn which lasted until June, 1842, was the only further major break in a life hereafter spent quietly painting, teaching, and making "excursions in search of the picturesque." When he died, ten days after his forty-seventh birthday, in 1848, he left behind a record of a distinct personality influenced more deeply than any other American painter by the artistic currents about him.

The American artistic consciousness at the time of Cole's first professional work in New York was curiously formless. A need for native work, portraying native scenes in a native way, was universally recognized. The National



Fig. 2. THOMAS COLE, *The Home in the Woods*
Minneapolis Institute of Arts



Fig. 3. THOMAS COLE, *Tornado in an American Forest*
Washington, D. C., Corcoran Gallery of Art



Fig. 5. THOMAS COLE, *Scene from The Last of the Mohicans*
Hartford, Conn., Wadsworth Athenaeum



Fig. 7. THOMAS COLE, *View of the White Mountains from*
Franconia Notch



Fig. 4. THOMAS COLE, *Drawing for a scene from*
The Last of the Mohicans
Detroit Institute of Arts



Fig. 6. THOMAS COLE, *View of Mount Washington*
Detroit Institute of Arts

Academy of Design was greeted with an enthusiasm which now seems undiscerning:

As a beginning, it presents more than could have been anticipated by its warmest friends and patrons. The paintings, generally, are true likenesses, and executed by American masters. Any encomium that we might bestow, would fall short of their merits . . .¹³

. . . we have become a powerful, populous, and *rich* nation, and it does not become us to go for ever plodding on in the beaten track of interest, without turning a kindly hand to drooping genius by the road-side. In England, the talent yearly called forth and embodied in pictures fresh and glowing from the easel, to adorn the apartments of the great and opulent, is immense; . . . and many cities and towns . . . have splendid and annual exhibitions most liberally supported. And why should it not be so here?¹⁴

The demand was present, certainly, as well as a sensible and patriotic appreciation of the possibilities for a native art. An essay published in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*:¹⁵

To the observer of nature our country presents a boundless and magnificent variety of charms. Valleys of quiet beauty, where hamlets are reposing in plenty and peace . . . streams that steal in murmurs through the under-wood; torrents that rend the rock, and dash through all impediments; and rivers moving in their majesty, as silent and sublime, and as resistless as the sweep of destiny. These, with the rugged grandeur of her unreachd mountains and untamed wilds, nature has lavished in inexpressible affluence around us. . . . And then, besides all this, is the high moral influence of our free institutions. The liberty—the growing greatness of our land—which will impart a tone of vigour to the efforts, even of the humblest individual. . . . In landscape painting, for which our country has such eminent advantages, we have artists competent to represent our scenes—the pictures of Doughty and Cole have a character decidedly American. The former infuses into his picture all that is quiet and lovely, romantic and beautiful in nature; the other imparts to his canvass the grandeur, the wild magnificance of mountain scenery. . . . How the patriot's heart should bound, and how his eye must kindle as it glances at the vast extending prospect of our land!

This yearning for a native art was amplified by a distrust of the "Old Masters" exhibited throughout the country. A reviewer, again in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*,¹⁶ writes:

We make an effort to give room for a particular notice of the pictures exhibited and for sale at the rooms of the American Academy in Barclay Street. It is well known to our readers, and the public generally, that most of these works of art are presented as 'undoubted originals' by various celebrated old masters, and moreover as being, one and all, productions of extraordinary merit,—far surpassing all the efforts of modern genius and

skill. We have been told the same thing five or six times within about the same number of years, touching various lots of pictures imported from Europe; and the assertion has been, and still is, believed by a large majority of the public, notwithstanding the extreme difficulty of establishing the paternity of a painting after the lapse of one or two hundred years, and the still greater improbability that works of such immense value as originals by great masters bear in Europe, should come to the United States begging for a purchaser. . . . It is time, we think, that some little caution should be employed in receiving these lofty pretensions.

We have, therefore, three clearly defined and documented reasons for the instantaneous success of any native artist who might choose to fulfill the prerequisites: (1) a wholesome awareness of the responsibilities of a society toward its artists; (2) an appreciation of the unequaled subject-matter in America itself; and, (3) a just suspicion of the imported, and expensive.

Cole's early pictures answer all of these demands. *The Home in the Woods*, 1825 (Fig. 2), in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, is doubtless composed of reminiscences of his own frontier life, plus sketched material from his various excursions. Cole's method of pictorial composition never varied; his canvases are composed of elements which, at various times, recommended themselves to him because of their striking character, their "picturesqueness". The word "picturesque," like the modern catch-all "interesting," is extremely unsusceptible to definition. In general, it can be said that the quality of the picturesque is in any object which, because of its age, its irregularity, or grandeur, or peculiar character, impresses the onlooker with a sense of natural wonder. It is also "like a picture," for "picturesque" scenes so described are those which, in nature, resemble the paintings of the artists then in vogue: Claude and Salvator Rosa particularly.¹⁷ The value is in its associations, both for the painter and the spectator: hence all the elements herein, the distant crag, the mill, the country road, the woodchopper, the contemplative reader, the twisting trio of maples, fit into the previously described conception of a native art. A second picture (now in Omaha), done during Cole's first year in New York and sold "to a gentleman in Hartford" for \$75.00,¹⁸ shows Daniel Boone sitting at the door of his cabin in the wilderness. The figure itself was certainly adopted from a life model in the National Academy of Design: the background again combines all the essential landscape elements. Having selected his picturesque ingredients, a first drawing was carefully made, either to illustrate a given text, or to illustrate a mood which the artist wished to set forth. A drawing for a scene from *The Last of the Mohicans* (Fig. 4) shows little

variation from the composition of the finished picture (Fig. 5), save for the necessary heightening of dramatic contrasts.

The landscape is infinitely superior to its source; it is still, to use the words of its first journalistic critic, "rich, grand, and impressive."¹⁹ The text has been entirely subjugated by the awesome surroundings, whose character is a visual transcription of the mood evoked by the melodrama enacted.

In October, 1828, Cole, with a companion, made a trip to the White Mountains. The MS of this journey, now in the Detroit Institute of Arts, and one of the pictures resulting from it, give us an excellent clue to the workings of his artistic capacities and the reasons he had for selecting the scenes he did. On climbing to the summit of Chocorua Peak, he wrote:

... The view was sublime but not a scene for the canvass [-] too much like a map. It was not for pictures I ascended the mountain, but for ideas of grandeur, for conceptions—and for these this was the region.

A view of Mount Washington from Franconia Notch (Fig. 6), made, probably, according to the diary, on the 8th of October, resulted in a picture now in the Wadsworth Athenaeum (Fig. 7). Picturesque elements, conforming more to his description of the scene than to the sketch, notably the dead trees at the extreme right, have been added. Another canvas in more theatrical vein, a *Catskill Mountain Scene* in the Rhode Island School of Design (Fig. 10), might be used to illustrate a further passage from his diary:

The stillness of this lake and the silence that reigned in this solitude was impressive and sublime. But alone as I was on the shore of that dark unrippled water with towering precipices above and almost impervious around, where the voice of man was not heard nor the sound of the axe there was an awfulness in the utter solitude that was almost painful. Many may seek such scenes and find pleasure in the discovery but there is a mysterious fear comes over him that hurries him away. The sublime features of nature are too severe for a lone man to look upon and be happy.

Cole's painting of trees, here most typical and unique in American landscape painting, began as naturalistic delineation but soon became an extension of his sensibility to the suggestive. In some notes on the "Passions and Characters of Trees"²⁰ he wrote:

Often, in tracing [treading?] the umbrageous masses of the forest my attention has been attracted by the appearance of action and expression in certain objects of nature [,] especially trees [,] and I have been led to contemplate the fine effects thus produced and to search into the causes and

I have found that principally arises from the analogy or resemblance there is between [the] human figure and the barkly inhabitant of the forest, the limbs and trunk of a tree with those of a man. . . . Poets have seen it and have spoken of trees intertwining their branches in seeming affection . . . The analogy between men and trees may be traced very far and to the lovers of nature may be an overflowing stream of enjoyment. In the sheltered valley trees have an air of tranquillity and assimilate with each other in form and character. So it is with man in those situations secluded from the stormy troubles of the world he assumes an equality seldom broken by originality of character. But place him in another scene exposed to the tempests of adversity and tossed in convulsions and revolutions of nations — then originality should [?] start forth in a thousand characters battling for existence and supremacy.

Numerous drawings, in looseleaf or sketchbooks, testify to this suggestive power. One (Fig. 8) has under it the following notation:

White Cedars from a swamp near the canal that runs from Albany to Buffalo — They were of large size — resembling the Hemlock in general appearance — The lower branches droop very much shooting downwards more than those of any tree I have ever seen — The foliage is feathery. A spring resembles . . . a weed of that foliated and fillagree kind — The Colour very light for an evergreen — The bark very much like that of the Chesnut — but rather thinner and lighter in Colour — This tree is extremely picturesque — It has a venerable appearance when dead.

Two others in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts (Fig. 9) were certainly chosen with an eye for their picturesque effect, to be used as motifs in compositions where their individuality might enrich the allusion.

A second facet of Cole's personality was polished by the first trip to Europe. Washington Allston, in a letter of advice, recommended that he spend considerable time in England.

The present English school comprises a great body of excellent artists, and many eminent in every branch. At the head of your friend's department he will find Turner, who, take him all in all, has no superior in any age. Turner's *Liber Studiorum* would be a most useful book for him to possess . . . I advise this disproportionate stay in England because I think it important that the *first bias* he receives should be a good one, inasmuch as on this not a little of the future tone of his mind will depend.²¹

In England Cole visited Turner, who was very kind to him, and who showed him the *Building of Carthage*, later to influence *The Course of Empire*. His color, rather weak in the early work, took on under Turner's influence a much

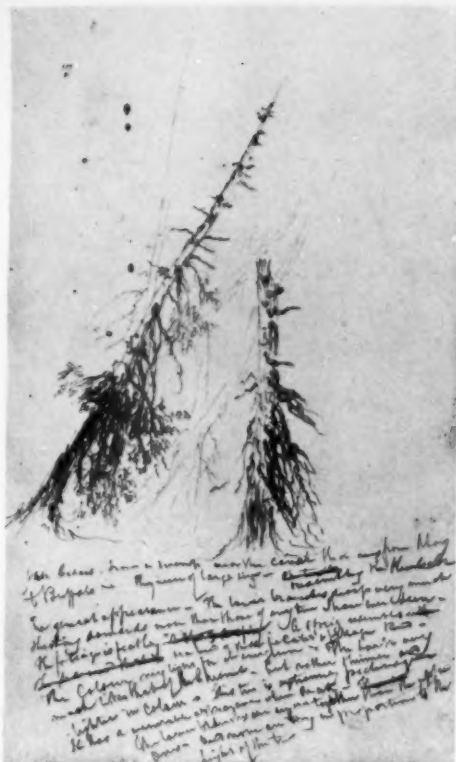


Fig. 8. THOMAS COLE, Drawing of
Cedars
Detroit Institute of Arts



Fig. 9. THOMAS COLE, Drawing of
Tree Trunks
Detroit Institute of Arts



Fig. 10. THOMAS COLE, Catskill Mountain Scene
Providence, Rhode Island School of Design



Fig. 11. THOMAS COLE, *View of Volterra*
Detroit Institute of Arts



Fig. 12. THOMAS COLE, *The Course of Empire:*
The Consummation of Empire
New York Historical Society

richer gamut. Inspired by his visits to galleries, and by conversations with Sir Thomas Lawrence, he reflected more adequately upon the nature of painting and the deficiencies of his own work. Writing in his diary, he says:

In subjects of a quiet character it is proper, it appears to me, to introduce much detail. When we view the lovely scenes of nature, the eye runs about from one object of beauty to another; it delights in the minute as well as in the vast. In the terrible and grand, when the mind is astonished, the eye does not dwell upon the minute, but seizes the whole. In the forest, during the hour of tempest, it is not the bough playing in the wind, but the whole mass stooping to the blast that absorbs the attention: the detail, however fine, is comparatively unobserved. In a picture of such a subject *detail* should not attract the eye, but *the whole*. It should be, in this case, the aim of the artist to impress the spirit of the entire scene upon the mind of the beholder. Detail, however, ought not to be neglected in the grandest subject. A picture without detail is a mere sketch. The finest scene in the world, one most fitted to awaken sensations of the sublime, is made up of minutest parts. These ought all to be given, but *so* given as to render them subordinate, the ministrative to one effect.

Two canvases done about this time, a *Tornado in an American Forest*, now in the Corcoran (Fig. 3), and a *Sunset in the Catskills*, now in Cleveland, a sumptuous canvas full of Turner's color, reflect these meditations. In May, 1831, he reached the Continent, and proceeded directly to Paris.

The Louvre and its contents left him cold. He wrote:²²

In the first place the subjects which French artists seem to delight in are either bloody or voluptuous: death, murder, battle, Venuses, Psyches, are portrayed in a cold hard and often tawdry style of colour and with an almost universal deficiency in chiaroscuro. The whole [is] artificial and theatrical. In portrait they are wretched, and in Landscape cold, laboured, and artificial. Scheffer's paintings are an exception and the only one to the previous animadversions. He has some real feeling.

Italy added to his lessons learned in England. Heretofore the "picturesque" in his art had been confined to landscape; now that landscape could be combined with the most picturesque architectural remains in the world. In company with Henry Greenough, the brother of Horatio Greenough the sculptor, he made many excursions and studied incessantly at draftsmanship and anatomical drawing. Curiously enough, the paintings completed in Florence were largely of American scenes, but his sketchbooks reveal what attracted him and what progress he had made from his early style. Volterra was a revelation to him. Writing to J. L. Morton,²³ he says:

More ancient than Rome it stands on the summit of an isolate mountain [and] looks down over a vast plain of arid and barren aspect and intersected by innumerable ravines, and one would readily believe that but few years had passed since the waves of a deluge had dashed over it (Fig. 11). Volterra is a remnant of the ancient world which the tide of time has not yet swept away, and the stupendous remains of its Etruscan walls which are formed of huge rocks piled on rocks as though raised by giant hands . . . are monuments of the power and genius of its ancient people.

Rome did not tempt him so much as southern Italy and Greek antiquity. The temples of Paestum were too powerful to describe, and too perfectly preserved to be stimulating: the walls of Paestum were a different matter.

Round these [we] had a delightful walk. They were built of large masses of travertine and about twenty feet thick with square towers at intervals, some of which yet form fine fragments of ruin, and one or two have been restored and serve for granaries; there is one large gate almost entire and several smaller ones . . . looking from their grassy and ivy mantled ruins one would scarcely imagine it possible that in that space there once existed a populous city famed for its luxury, for scarce a trace remains except the temples and in their immediate vicinity. And in the place of palaces amidst the bowers of roses amongst which Virgil said he had walked—a few miserable dwellings are seen surrounded by filth and peopled by beings that scarcely seem human . . . Thus it is time passes and transmutes as with a magic wand. A people of elegant luxury with the beautiful works of their hands have passed away—all but enough to mark the spot and attest their genius—in their place are wretches without knowledge or refinement and blasted by [the] malaria of the desert plains they neglect to cultivate.²⁴

This preoccupation with the transiency of human creations became an *idée fixe* in Cole's mind. The paintings done after his return to Catskill show, first of all, the settling influence of his contact with the English landscape, and secondly, his didactic historical side. Two Hudson River scenes, one in the Brooklyn Museum, and another in the Lenox collection of the New York Public Library, are very different in character from his previous work. Here the mood is tranquil, unforced, and more realistic than episodic. The detail is greater, the gradations of tone more atmospheric: they might pass for lesser Morlands. A sketch made in England and carried out in Catskill resulted in a small canvas now in the Wadsworth Athenaeum: a *View on the Thames near Pope's Villa*. Here, and in a pen sketch in the Detroit Institute of Arts Turner's help toward a greater freedom of rendering is apparent.

In 1833 Cole was approached by Luman Reed, who wished to have one room of his house furnished with paintings for a salon. Cole, writing to his

patron on September 18th, broached a scheme which harks to the sentiments expressed at Paestum.

A series of pictures might be painted that should illustrate the History of a natural scene as well as be an Epitome of Man, showing the natural changes of landscape and those effected by man in his progress from Barbarism to Civilization—to Luxury—to the vicious state or state of destruction—and to the state of Ruin and Desolation.

The philosophy of my subject is drawn from the history of the past, wherein we see how nations have arisen from the Savage State, to that of Power and Glory and then fallen and become extinct. Natural scenery has also its changes, the seasons of the day and of the year, sunshine and storm. These justly applied will give expression to each picture of the Series I would paint. It will be well to have the same location in each picture. This location may be identified by the introduction of some striking object in each scene—a mountain of peculiar form for instance . . . The scene must be composed so as to be picturesque in its wild state, appropriate for the cultivated and the site of a sea-port . . . The first picture representing the Savage State must be a view of a wilderness [,] the sun rising from the sea and the clouds of night retiring over the mountains. The figures must be savage [,] clothed in skins and occupied in the chase. There must be flashing chiaro-scuero and spirit of motion pervading the scene—as though nature was just springing from chaos. The second picture must be the Pastoral State. The day farther advanced than the first—light clouds playing about the mountains—the scene partly cultivated—a rude village near the bay—small vessels in the harbour—groups of peasants . . . engaged in some simple amusement. The chiaro-scuero must be of a milder character than in the previous scene; but yet have a fresh and breezy effect. The third must be noonday—a great city girding the bay, gorgeous piles of architecture, bridge, aqueducts, etc. All that can be combined to show the fullness of prosperity (Fig. 12) . . . The fourth should be a Tempest—a Battle and the burning of the city. Towers falling, arches broken, vessels wrecking in the harbour. In this scene should be a fierce chiaro-scuero—masses and groups swaying about like stormy waves. This is the scene of Destruction, or vicious state. The fifth must be a sunset—the mountains riven—the city desolate ruin—columns standing isolated amid the encroaching waters. Ruined temples, broken bridges, fountains, sarcophagi, etc., no human figure—a solitary bird, perhaps . . . This picture must be as the funeral knell of a departed greatness and may be called the state of Desolation.²⁵

The outcome of this program was perhaps the most extraordinary series of paintings in American art. Cole worked at them for three years, and when they were finally exhibited at the National Academy of Design, their success was stupendous.

His complete success was now achieved, and all that was needed to round

out his personality was some conviction superior to artistic and patriotic principles. In his "Essay on American Scenery,"²⁶ an eloquent appraisal and recapitulation of all his enthusiasms, he says:

It is generally admitted that the liberal arts tend to soften our manners; but they do more—they carry with them the power to mend our hearts.

Poetry and Painting sublime and purify thought, by grasping the past, the present, and the future—they give the mind a foretaste of its immortality, and thus prepare it for performing an exalted part amid the realities of life.

He who looks on nature with a 'loving eye' cannot move from his dwelling without the salutation of beauty; even in the city the deep blue sky and the drifting clouds appeal to him. And if to escape its turmoil—if only to obtain a free horizon, land and water in the play of light and shadow yields delight—let him be transported to those favored regions, where the features of the earth are more varied, or yet add the sunset, that wreath of glory daily bound around the world, and he, indeed, drinks from pleasure's purest cup. The delight such a man experiences is not merely sensual, or selfish, that passes with the occasion leaving no trace behind; but in gazing on the pure creations of the Almighty, he feels a calm religious tone steal through his mind, and when he has turned to mingle with his fellow men, the chords which have been struck in that sweet communion cease not to vibrate.

Again, in a manuscript "Lecture on Art":²⁷

Painting and Sculpture are the vehicles of sentiment, passion, or information—they are no more profane, holy or virtuous than eloquence—than poetry; like these they may minister to each and every feeling of man;—they have power; but that power is subservient to the will of society, though at the same time they serve to impel with mighty force the human mind in whatever direction it may start . . . Of what weighty importance is it then that we direct Art into pure and healthful channels and not permit her copious streams to nurture rank and poisonous weeds; but to lead . . . to the production of *beauty, glory, and virtue* . . . Through Art ideal beauty takes possession of the mind, hallows and elevates it above the sordid and the vulgar and though it may not sanctify the heart, it renders it susceptible to religious impressions.

Hereafter all of Cole's work is permeated with this moral conviction, that the moods of a painting should predispose the onlooker to pious introspection. An interesting sample of this can be seen in a sketch, done in 1836, now in the Cleveland Museum, for the finished picture of *The Oxbow*, now in the Metropolitan. The sketch (Fig. 13) is a simple topographical landscape with a rather merry party in the foreground; the exhibition picture (Fig. 14)

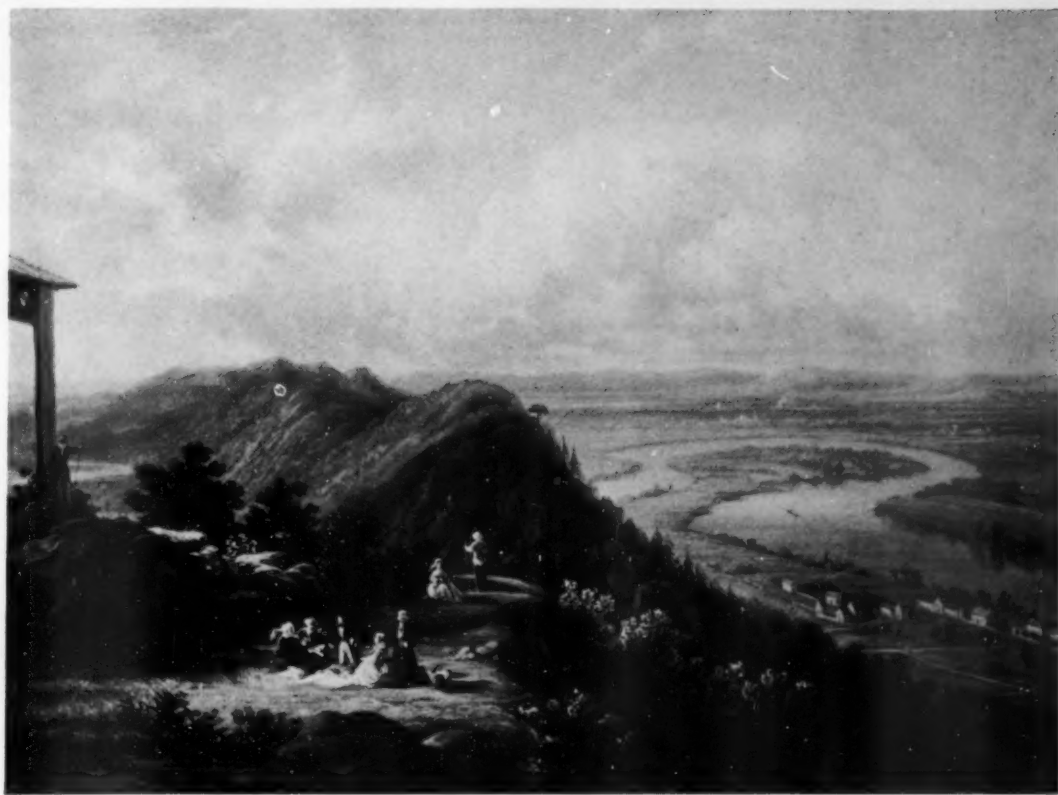


Fig. 13. THOMAS COLE, *The Oxbow*
Cleveland Museum of Art



Fig. 14. THOMAS COLE, *The Oxbow*
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



*Fig. 15. THOMAS COLE, *The Departure*
Washington, D. C., Corcoran Gallery of Art*



*Fig. 16. THOMAS COLE, *The Return*
Washington, D. C., Corcoran Gallery of Art*

has eliminated the first foreground altogether and substituted a shaggy, romantic landscape, with a thunderstorm. Knowing Cole's thoughts as we do, it is not too much to say that the peaceful valley in the background is certainly symbolic of the tranquil mind which, ideally at least, succeeds a period of turmoil.

The Departure and *The Return* of 1837, in the Corcoran, carry out the fusion of moral ideas with landscape. They were done for William van Renssalaer, of Albany (Figs. 15 and 16). A New York critic²⁸ greeted them enthusiastically:

... we can say that, in our opinion, as far as the subjects would permit, he has *outdone himself*, and produced two more perfect works of art. These pictures represent Morning and Evening, or Sunrise and Sunset; and are, merely in that point of view, invaluable . . . But the painter has added the charm of poetick fancy and the Gothick structures of the middle ages to that profusion of beauties, which nature presents at all times. Not only this is done, but a story is told by the poet-painter, elucidateing at once, the times of chivalry and feudal barbarism, and the feelings with which man rushes forth in the morning and day of life, and the slow funereal movements which attend the setting of *his sun*.

There is little more to be said in reference to individual works. The paintings done during his second European trip maintain these standards. Perhaps the most successful is the *Valley of the Vaucluse*, now in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 1). Cole's travel diary gives us the setting:

I then pursued my way towards the head of the vale: the grandeur of the scene increased at every step. The beetling crags closed in upon the valley on all sides, and the river, which before was rapid, now dashed furiously down, tossed and tormented, over the jagged rocks. Not an eddy, not a spot of green or smooth water—all was white, like a torrent of commingled hail and snow, and down the glen it thundered, and the huge cliffs reverberated the roar. A little higher still, and how the scene was changed! at the base of a precipice of vast height, was a basin of green water, deep and clear, of small extent, and exhibiting a surface but little troubled. I have seldom felt the sublimity of nature more deeply . . . I descended the valley, crossed the little bridge at the village, and climbed the crag on which the ruin stands. It commands fine, I may say fearful views of the scene below. Roofless, many of its walls thrown prostrate, its halls and courts are filled with flowering plants and odoriferous shrubs, thyme, and lavender. I plucked some flowers as a memento, and departed.

Nearly every picture painted could be similarly documented. *Mt. Aetna from Taormina, Sicily*, in the Wadsworth Athenaeum, with its single shepherd

among the ruins, the *Vale and Temple of Segesta*, in the New York Historical Society, the *Evening in Arcady*, Toledo Museum (Fig. 17), are all examples. Two works may be used, finally, to close the discussion. One, *St. John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness*, in the Wadsworth Athenaeum, and finally, the *Expulsion from the Garden*, in the New York Public Library.

In his private diary, "Thoughts and Occurrences,"²⁹ reflecting on the true and the beautiful in art and nature, Cole wrote:

... doubtless [they] are one. Truth is the fixed and unchangeable standard of taste. A work of art, however it may please the fancy and amuse the eye of the multitude at first, unless built upon truth, will presently pass away: on the contrary, one which has truth for its foundation will remain permanent, and make its ways to the mind and heart at last, though it struggle for a season with neglect. By truth in nature, I mean anything's fulfillment of the objects and purposes for which it was created. The true leaf or flower, for instance, will be that which perfectly performs its various functions, and so accomplishes its appointed work. In the human form the true and beautiful will be that which is completely developed for the ends and offices of life. By the true in art, I mean the imitation of the true in nature, not the imitation of accidents, nor merely the common imitation of nature indiscriminately. All nature is not true. I may instance the withered vine, the imperfect flower, the stunted tree. These are false, and deformities. I would say, the true and the beautiful in art are the reproduction of the perfect in nature, and the carrying out of principles, which nature suggests. Art, in its true sense, is, in fact, man's lowly imitation of the creative power of the Almighty.

Thus Cole's work, and the philosophy behind it. It represents, first of all, an acceptance of, rather than a rebellion against, prevailing standards of taste. These, established in England, mainly through the poetry of Wordsworth and the arbiters of the "picturesque," like Gilpin, were amplified by the unique demands of the American public at the time of Cole's productivity. These were, that American subject matter should be foremost, and that artists should be and usually were deserving of local patronage, because, at least so far as the public knew them, the old masters were beneath consideration. However, no clear idea existed of what an American art was or might be. Taste was catholic in the extreme: ruins, Gothic cathedrals, tornado riven forests, Greek slaves, and didactic allegories were unconditionally approved. The basis for this approval was the "romantic sensibility" rather than true romanticism. The desideratum was *mood*, translated into visual terms on a literary foundation, and the mood might emanate from anything that had been estab-

lished as fashionable. Cole, acting as a barometer of public taste, could draw architecturally facile delineations of classic or mediaeval ruins, native waterfalls, tantalizing fragments of scenery, or what-not, and incorporate them into imaginative compositions (Fig. 18), with no suspicion of inconsistency. His poetic reveries, transcribed in paint, such as the *Evening in Arcady* in the Toledo Museum (Fig. 17), and fantastic inventions, like the *Andean Scenery* he never visited (New York Public Library), aroused in the onlooker the appropriate sensations of wistful pastoral yearning or awe-stricken wonder. Over and above all this, since it was the duty of the artist to elevate, while evoking a given mood, was the Bunyunesque device of pointing out parables through aesthetic means. In the *Voyage of Life* the synthetic but entirely sincere amalgam can be seen with all its implications.

From such susceptibility to the impressions of nature, of antiquity, or of religion, indiscriminate if you will but in no way forced or doctrinaire, the "romantic sensibility" drew its inspiration. Cole reproduced with great earnestness and a disarming integrity the random enthusiasms of an impressionable and eager public. In so doing he performed the invaluable function of being an unconscious critic, so that American art was thereafter free to select, edit, and refine the subjects he had begun. Martin and Inness in the pastoral landscape; F. E. Church in the dramatic landscape; Vedder and LaFarge in allegory, were all more capable extensions of that propensity of the American mind, the ever-present desire for emotional suggestion, of which Cole was the first and most literal exponent.

¹ Perhaps the King's School, founded in 1541 for the accommodation of twenty-four poor scholars.

² A MS diary of this journey, written in pencil, and much work kept apparently by James Cole, is in the New York State Library, Albany, New York.

³ "Emma Moreton, A West Indian Tale," *The Saturday Evening Post*, IV, No. 20 (May 14, 1825), 1.

⁴ William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, July 13, 1798," *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798. Wordsworth's "aesthetic experience" has recently been very well analyzed by Oscar James Campbell, "Wordsworth's Conception of the Aesthetic Experience," *Wordsworth and Coleridge, Studies in Honor of George McClean Harper* (Princeton, 1939), pp. 26-46.

⁵ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book VI, lines 556-564.

⁶ Cf. *The Western Herald and Steubenville Gazette*, XI, No. 47 (November 28, 1818).

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, XIII, No. 33 (August 12, 1820).

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, XIII, No. 5 (January 29, 1820).

⁹ Cf. J. A. Caldwell, *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio* (Wheeling, West Virginia, 1880), p. 467.

¹⁰ *New York American*, VII, No. 1914 (May 25, 1826), 2.

¹¹ MS in the New York Historical Society, dated July 15, 1826.

¹² Notes in Sketchbook No. 3, dated 1828, collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Reg. No. 39.560, p. 63.

¹³ *New York Gazette and General Advertiser*, XXXVI (May 16, 1826), 2.

¹⁴ *New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, III, No. 46 (June 10, 1826), 366.

¹⁵ "The Fine Arts in America, and Its Peculiar Incentive to their Cultivation," *Knickerbocker Magazine*, II, No. 1 (July, 1833), 30 ff.

¹⁶ *Knickerbocker Magazine*, V, No. 5 (May, 1835), 465 ff.

¹⁷ For an excellent précis of the picturesque, cf. Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England* (New York, 1925), Chapter VII, pp. 167 ff.

¹⁸ Notation in Writing Book No. 1, 1825-26, p. 1, collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

¹⁹ *New York Morning Courier*, I, No. 31 (June 7, 1827), 2.

²⁰ In the MS "Catskilliana," New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²¹ Letter to H. Pickering, quoted in Jared B. Flagg's *The Life and Letters of Washington Allston* (New York, 1892), pp. 203 ff.

²² Notes on his first trip to Europe, in a writing book in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Reg. No. 39.558, p. 16.

²³ Letter dated January 31, 1832. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²⁴ Journal of a Tour to Paestum, May 23, 1832. Detroit Institute of Arts, Reg. No. 39.564, p. 47.

²⁵ Letter to Luman Reed, September 18, 1833. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²⁶ "Proceedings of the American Lyceum," *The American Monthly Magazine*, New Series, I (January, 1936), 1 ff.

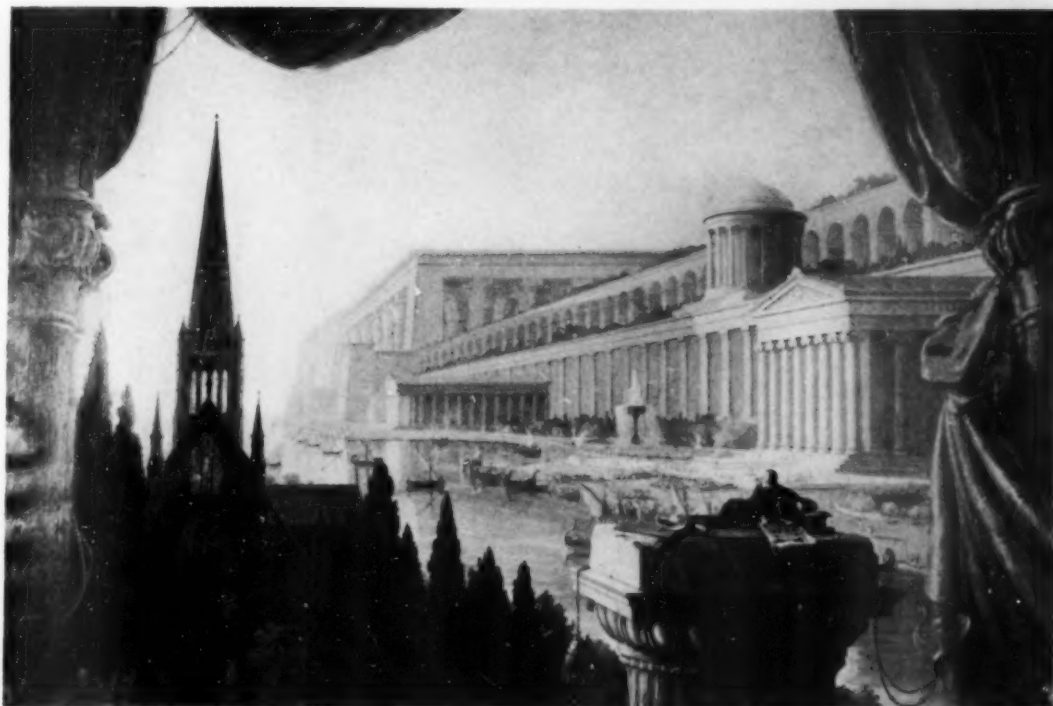
²⁷ MS in the New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²⁸ *New York Mirror*, XV, No. 26 (December 23, 1837), 203.

²⁹ MS in the New York State Library, Albany, New York.



*Fig. 17. THOMAS COLE, **An Evening in Arcady**
Toledo Museum of Art*



*Fig. 18. THOMAS COLE, **The Architect's Dream**
Catskill, New York, Florence Cole Vincent Coll.*



Fig. 1. JUSEPE DE RIBERA, *Ecstasy of the Magdalen*
New York, Hispanic Society of America



Fig. 2. JUSEPE DE RIBERA, *Immaculate Conception*,
Salamanca, Convento de las Agustinas Descalzas

THE MAGDALEN OF THE HISPANIC SOCIETY BY JUSEPE DE RIBERA

By DELPHINE FITZ DARBY

THE *Ecstasy of the Magdalen* (Fig. 1) in the collection of the Hispanic Society of America, there attributed to Jusepe de Ribera, has a composure and tranquillity unexpected in the work of an artist proverbially rude and vehement. To some students of Spanish painting it brings welcome evidence that the "gloomy genius" was not incapable of a gentle mood. But to Dr. Mayer, the critic of Ribera, the work conveys no assurance of authenticity.¹ It agrees thoroughly, he says, with *Lo Spagnoletto's* technical rendering yet must be regarded as a copy by the prolific Luca Giordano. In the light of evidence, old and new, we may nevertheless be sure that the painting is neither an accidental aberration from Ribera's norm nor a softened copy by a late imitator.

The Hispanic Society work is one of several Riberesque versions of the theme; the group includes: (1) the signed painting of the Academia de San Fernando, Madrid (Fig. 3), (2) the canvas acquired late in the nineteenth century by Dr. Martius of Bonn,² (3) the Hispanic Society painting, and (4) the variant of the Prado Museum (No. 1316). To these we may possibly add a fifth version that formerly belonged to the Maréchal de Beurnonville,³ and a sixth, once in the collection of King Louis-Philippe of France, unless these are respectively identifiable with the second and third versions.⁴

The existence of multiple repetitions of the *Ecstasy* implies that the painting was highly esteemed and that some special circumstance promoted interest in the Magdalen's legend, particularly in the episode of the Levitation. The theme had, of course, been available to artists since the publication of the *Legenda Aurea*; many Spanish predecessors of Ribera painted the Ecstasy in the Wilderness of the Sainte Baume.⁵ Their works, not the more famous examples of alien schools, established Ribera's iconography. The Spanish antecedents account for the non-frontal figure, kneeling in humility and fully clothed. Dürer's woodcut, presenting the Magdalen erect and completely nude, though doubtless known to Ribera, was not his source. The naked figure, symbol of the soul stripped of all worldly pomp, was a luxury prohibited to a Spanish artist. In Bologna Denys Calvaert and in Rome the Cavaliere d'Arpino were free to prolong Dürer's tradition; but in Naples the Bolognese

rivals of Ribera, Domenichino and Lanfranco, deferred to the taste of Spanish patrons and clothed their Magdalens in ample garments and in flowing hair.⁶

The intensified interest in the Magdalen, appearing suddenly in Bologna, Rome, and Naples, was doubtless stimulated by the widely read *Libro de la Conversión de la Magdalena* of the Spanish Augustinian, Fray Pedro Malón de Chaide.⁷ First published in 1588, this book became so popular that new editions were printed in 1592, 1593, 1596, 1600, and 1603. It owed its success to the fact that it had the requisites of a "best seller" of its day. Composed chiefly in prose, it contains charming passages in verse, paraphrases of the Psalms and the Song of Songs, allegedly intercalated in order to bring relaxation to readers wearied by theological controversy. The work is austere and moral, not elevated above a certain level of earthliness and materialism; yet it is at the same time picturesque, colorful, ceremonious, even akin to those very romances that it castigates.

The temper of the concluding chapter which treats the ecstasy of the Saint, is remarkably like that of Ribera's painting. With a light but worldly touch, the author describes a company of angelic gamins who, observing that the Saint is "enferma de amor," tease her with embarrassing questions:

Are you not the famous woman who with your eyes robbed a thousand hearts? Are you not she of the pretty clothes? . . . Where now are the gala dress and the court costumes? Are they this haircloth that you go about in?

In an intensely erotic passage Malón then tells how the Saint heard the voice of the Celestial Spouse bidding her, "surge, propera, amica mea et veni," and how she responded:

Oh King of Glory, my sweet beloved, I sense thy desired presence . . . I see my desire fulfilled, I see thee, hear thee, hold thee; I shall never leave thee . . . always I shall have thee with me and be with thee . . . receive in thine arms, Lord, me who comes to thee . . . Let us exchange, Lord, and take thou me that I may serve thee, and give thee to me that I may enjoy thee.

In solemn piety Fray Pedro concludes:

That glorious soul rises up and is received and embraced; and all the choir of heaven begins to sing, and with music and pomp she rises to triumph and to reign in that eternal realm of glory where she rejoices with her Beloved and God and Lord who lives for all the ages without end. Amen.

Thus miraculously the "mulier quae erat in civitate peccatrix" becomes as the Bride of Solomon; and thus appreciable hope is offered to the most desperate class of transgressors.

As the scene was described so Ribera painted it. His cherubs are piquant winged boys who have gathered the symbols of the penitent; his mystic *Esposa* of the original version is a rapturous, ungainly girl, clad in a tattered hair shirt⁸ and in the hair that falls like a nun's veil about her shoulders. Though a modern French critic (E. Conte) may find her unlovely, she is none the less enamored, sick of love. The celestial choir and "the sun of inaccessible clarity whose love embraces, whose splendor burns" are at least suggested in the revised versions. Neither Padre Malón nor Ribera introduced any earth-bound witness to the miracle. The older masters, following the *Legenda Aurea*, frequently presented such a witness in the person of an Arlesian hermit. When he is present, we are reminded of the mediaeval literary device of the "framed tale" whereby the respectable narrator contrives to disclaim responsibility for a fantastic story.⁹ Conversely, the absence of the witness indicates that both author and painter were confident of a public able to accept the validity of the mystical experience.

As the *Magdalen* gained new devotees, there was demand for replicas of Ribera's painting. The earliest version, that of Madrid, is indisputably genuine for it bears the characteristic signature: Jusepe de Ribera, español f.1626. The faintly legible date was read as 1636 by Justi; but the facial type, the slender, active hands, the boyish proportions of the body, and the coarse color and quality of the scarlet robe place the work in the earlier decade. These are traits freshly translated from the painter's native Valencian style—the style which has an apposite example in the *Santa Teresa de Jesús* (Fig. 4).¹⁰ The Madrid *Ecstasy* was painted in Naples, perhaps for an altar dedicated to the Magdalen. But it cannot have remained *in situ* long after 1631 for it was evidently one of those paintings that Velasquez, on the occasion of his first visit to Italy, acquired for his patron, King Philip IV of Spain.¹¹ The owners of the picture could hardly resist the court painter's overture, especially if the negotiation was furthered by the Viceroy or by the Count of Monterrey, who was then Ambassador to the Pope and Viceroy-designate. But if the proprietors bargained shrewdly, they may have asked the right to retain their altarpiece until it should be replaced by a copy. In other cases such a request was sometimes granted, and in this the outcome would naturally have been the second variant.

The Bonn version is almost an exact copy. Two cherubs present in the original are here happily omitted,¹² and the clouds assume the shape of rosy heads. The scourge is swung less vigorously, and the vase and skull are inter-

changed for the sake of a better psychological effect. These are improvements; yet the inferior brushwork suggests that the copy was executed by an assistant. His identity is perhaps indicated by the coarser features, thicker lips, and fuller cheeks. The facial type, though still Valencian, recalls that of Espinosa.¹³ The copyist may well be Espinosa's disciple Juan Do who in the 1620's left Valencia to become Ribera's collaborator and indeed his alter ego.¹⁴ In time the copy followed the original to Spain. It must inevitably have done so, for whatever was overlooked or rejected by one rapacious viceroy was discovered and carried away by a successor.

The New York variant propounds a more delicate problem. Twice removed from the prototype, it retains every alteration consciously made in the Bonn work and introduces others more significant. The hands of the Saint, here copied after the Dürer woodcut, assume an attitude of prayer and concomitantly one of the cherubs adopts a new pose lest he seem to mimic the Magdalen. The hair shirt has yielded place to a less irritating garment, and the mantle, now fashioned of rose colored satin, is a fitter habit for the *Esposa*. As a slight concession to a patron who may have liked the Magdalen nude, the upper arm is revealed. The figure has matured and the vapid, blond face, no longer wide-eyed and Valencian, suggests the women of Annibale Caracci and Guido Reni. Without diminution of the customary Riberesque sobriety, the painting acquires that refinement and studied nobility that is characteristic of the Bolognese academicians. The difference cannot be explained by the loss of inspiration commonly suffered by the maker of a copy. As an example of the work of an imitator we have the fourth version now in the Prado (No. 1316).¹⁵

If the Hispanic Society *Ecstasy* were the only work of its quality, we might overlook the genuineness of the brushwork and attribute it to a member of the atelier. But, as has been ably demonstrated, the New York painting is closely related in style to certain works by Ribera whose authenticity is completely established, among them the *Visit of the Holy Family to S. Bruno*, the *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Cleopatra*.¹⁶ Much more significant, however, is the resemblance to the *Inmaculada* of the Agustinas Descalzas of Salamanca (Fig. 2)¹⁷ which is signed and dated: Jusepe de Ribera, español Valenciano, F.1635. Since all the works of this style are of approximately the same date, we are bound to believe that at that time Ribera consciously adopted a new manner.¹⁸

The new style was prudently assumed not merely in response to a general

shift in taste (the inevitable reaction against *caravaggismo*), but rather as a special concession to the predilection of a munificent client, Don Manuel de Zúñiga y Fonseca, Conde de Monterrey, from 1631-1637 Viceroy of Naples. Previously this nobleman had served as Ambassador Extraordinary to Pope Urban VIII and was responsible for His Holiness' proclamation of the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception. A scholarly diplomat, versed in the subtleties of theological controversy, Monterrey was also an expert critic of the arts and an insatiable collector. His taste was discreet, fastidious, conforming with the Italian rather than the Spanish ideal; for this reason the church and the palace that he caused to be built in Salamanca are remarkable among Spanish monuments for delicate ornament and a pure canon of proportion. He loved best the Bolognese masters, the most precise, academic, and disciplined of the great Seicento Schools. Thus he encouraged the Chapter of the Cathedral of Naples to bid for Guido's services, and, failing to obtain them, he would have been content to accept those of lesser Guideschi had not Ribera interfered. Consequently Domenichino was honored with the Viceroy's guarantee of protection, and, when he proved to be a slow executant, another Bolognese, Giovanni Lanfranco, was called. Ribera made for the Cathedral a single painting—the *Miracle of St. Januarius*. Because he was not charged with the entire commission, as he doubtless wished to be, De Dominici assumed that he was less esteemed than his Bolognese rivals. But, since he was willing to adopt their style, he was, in fact, indispensable to the Viceroy who was then cherishing a project far dearer to him than the embellishment of Naples—the adornment of his personal memorial, the Church of S. Agustín in Salamanca.

The monument, as it exists today, is scarcely as the orderly mind of the Count designed it.¹⁹ There are, of course, the splendid orant statues of Manuel and his wife, made by Finelli, for their tombs in the presbytery, and other relics of a grandiose scheme: Lanfranco's *Adoration of the Three Kings*, who were the patron saints of his father Gaspar de Zúñiga and his uncles Baltasar and Melchor; Carletto Veronese's *Magdalen*, the Saint to whom the Countess Leonor María Guzmán de Zúñiga was devoted,²⁰ and above all, Ribera's colossal painting of the *Virgin Immaculate* as conceived in the mind of the Creator, the Lord Emmanuel, whose august name the Count bore. As the principal canvas of the great retable, the *Inmaculada* is impressive and suitable; the splendid effect is marred by the presence of four lateral panels, incongruous in theme, diverse in style and unequal in quality. These the Count

of Monterrey did not place in their present site. Perhaps his heir, Doña Isabel,²¹ injudiciously selected them from the works in the gallery of the Palace and offered them as substitutes for paintings projected but never accomplished; perhaps a more recent Conde de Monterrey sent them to fill spaces left vacant by the plundering generals of Napoleon or the agent of Louis-Philippe. More appropriate companions to the *Inmaculada* can well be imagined: the virgin Saints Agnes and Catherine, for example, or St. Elizabeth, mother of the untainted Precursor.²² The *Magdalen* now in New York would also have been an admirable complement to the *Purísima*, the *gran pecadora* kneeling at the feet of the Virgin Conceived without Sin, both ascending from earth with their glorious attributes; both, though of unequal order, Brides of Christ.²³

Since the Count of Monterrey was a Salamantine, almost certainly a student at the famous university²⁴ where, years earlier, Pedro Malón became the disciple of Fray Luis de León, and very certainly a generous benefactor of the Augustinian order, he must have read the esteemed *Libro de la Conversión de la Magdalena*. He knew then that the Saint was therein depicted as a sinner, as a penitent, and in a state of grace. He could not expect the austere Ribera to portray her as a sinner. The *Magdalen Renouncing her Luxury*, *Rebuked by Martha*, and *Weeping at the Grave* were themes more wisely assigned to Jusepe's voluptuous colleague, Artemisia Gentileschi. But as a penitent Ribera did paint her: a chastened maiden at her devotions (Prado 1103), a lachrymose girl morbidly embracing the skull (Prado 1104), a disheveled visionary dreaming of her redemption (Prado 1105).

The last was painted in the manner preferred by Monterrey. It is unsigned and, like the Hispanic Society canvas, has fallen into the class of questionable attributions.²⁵ But surely the hand that painted it is that which etched the signed *St. Jerome*. The knees, the shins, the feet and toes have their counterpart in the print; and the sharp elbow, the flaccid muscles of the arm, the long, flowing hair, and the sentimental face have theirs in the New York painting. Having recognized Ribera's loftier and more gracious manner, assumed for the gratification of his patron, we may debate whether Monterrey displayed wisdom in mollifying the painter's impetuous genius; but we can no longer doubt the authorship of the *Penitent* or of the *Ecstatic Magdalen*. Rather we may perceive a new aspect of a personality that was versatile and on occasion amenable.

¹ A. L. Mayer, *Josepe de Ribera*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1923, pp. 187-191.

² C. Justi, *Zeitschrift für Christliche Kunst*, V (1892), 1-10, especially Taf. I, the Bonn *Magdalen*.

³ H. Mireur, *Dictionnaire des Ventes d'Art*, Paris, 1912, VI, 250 ("1884.—Beurnonville.—*Assomption de la Madeleine*: 4000 fr."). Cf. *ibid.*, p. 249 ("1850.—Louis-Philippe.—*Assomption de la Madeleine*: 5000 fr.").

⁴ *Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole exposés dans les salles du Musée Royal au Louvre*, Paris, 1838, p. 60 f., No. 229, "*Assomption de la Madeleine* . . . h. 2 m. 55 c.—1.1 m. 75 c." The *Magdalen* of the Hispanic Society measures 2 m. 56.4 c. x 1 m. 93 c. When acquired, however, it was enclosed in an adequate frame, the recorded dimensions being 2 m. 30 c. x 1 m. 81 c. The dark margin, perceptible in the photograph, may indicate that a rigorous cleaning occurred while the painting was in a small frame. The difference in the size of the various frames may account for discrepancies. The work can be traced to the collection of Principe Fondi, thence to the dealer Sangiorgi and to Signor Simonetti, the penultimate owner; but we do not know from what source the Principe Fondi got it. Of the Maréchal de Beurnonville, presumed owner of the Bonn copy, we know that he served the French government in Spain and died in 1876. King Louis-Philippe's gallery was assembled in Spain by a Flemish agent, Baron Taylor. Much of it was sold at Christie's, London, in 1853.

⁵ C. R. Post, *A History of Spanish Painting*, II, 429, Fig. 236 (School of the Master of St. George); IV, 272, Fig. 96 (the St. Nicholas Master?); IV, 607 (Bernardo Serra?); IV, 658, Fig. 271 (School of Nicolás Francés); VII, 491 (Imitator of Rafael Vergós); VII, 667, Fig. 255 (Valentín Montoliú); VII, 805 (the Lanaja Master); VIII, 252 (Roig and Rius?); VIII, 573 (the Fonollosa Master).

⁶ *Indicazione Sommaria dei quadri . . . della R. Pinacoteca di Torino*, Florence, 1866, p. 24, No. 156, and *Catalogo della Regia Pinacoteca di Torino*, Turin, 1899, p. 138, No. 507. Cf. X Barbier de Montault, *Revue de l'art chrétien*, XXIX (1880), 120-126, and H. Voss, *Die Malerei des Barock in Rom*, Berlin, 1924, pp. 200, 509 f., 512, 527. Guido Cagnacci's *Magdalen*, reproduced in the *Enciclopedia Espasa*, XXXII, pl. following p. 64, is somewhat similar in style to Ribera's.

⁷ *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, XXVII (Madrid, 1926), 275-417; G. Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature*, New York, 1849, III, 180 f.; J. Hurtado and A. González Palencia, *Historia de la literatura española*, 3rd ed., Madrid, 1932, pp. 428 ff.; R. del Arco, "El Padre Malón de Chaide," *Archivo Histórico Hispano-Agustiano*, XV (1920), 166-186.

⁸ The hair shirt appears to be an iconographical innovation of Ribera.

⁹ As, for example, in *The Arabian Nights*, the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Decameron*.

¹⁰ This work is now in a private collection in Seville, natal city of Juan de Ribera, Archbishop of Valencia, who died in 1611. Devoted to the "seraphic Madre" the Archbishop caused several "portraits" of her to be made by Valencian masters. For comment on a germane though less attractive *Santa Teresa de Jesús* in the Museo Provincial, Valencia, see D. F. Darby, *Francisco Ribalta and his School*, Cambridge, 1938, p. 147; and M. González Martí, *Los grandes maestros del Renacimiento*, Valencia, 1928, p. 213 and illustration on p. 245. Two *Magdalens* by Ribalta were once in the Louis-Philippe collection (Nos. 217, 218), but are now lost.

¹¹ Arriving in Spain, it was sent along with a famous *Trinity* of approximately the same date to the Escorial. There Bayeu, Goya, and Gómez included it in their inventory of 1794, and there in 1800 Ceán Bermúdez recorded it—"a female saint penitent on a throne of angels" in "a room behind the relics, the room through which one passes to the palace." In 1813 the picture set out on its second long voyage, packed in the second of six boxes, the contents of which were sent as a tribute to Napoleon and by him exhibited in the Louvre. Restored to the Spanish government by Louis XVIII, it was placed provisionally in the Academia whence the friars of El Escorial chose not to redeem it for the cost of transportation. Hence, for a brief period, the work could have been seen in close proximity to the Louis-Philippe and Beurnonville versions. See P. de Madrazo, *Viaje artístico por las colecciones de cuadros*, Barcelona, 1884, pp. 295 ff.

¹² Dr. Mayer believes that the omission, which to him appears unhappy, postulates the work of a copyist. It is true that the gesture of the cherub at the left has no visible object in the copy; but the actual effect of beckoning toward an invisible train of cherubim or to some unseen spectator on the distant earth is perhaps less disturbing than the figure emerging from the frame. Justi has analyzed the alterations here noted.

¹³ For illustrations of Espinosa's works see L. Tramoyeres Blasco, "El pintor J. J. de Espinosa," *Archivo de Arte Valenciano*, I (1915), 127 ff., and II (1916), 1 ff., figures in the text.

¹⁴ To English speaking students Do's name may suggest the personification of anonymity. B. De Dominici, who may have known Do's long lived daughter Anna, mentioned him in the *Vite dei pittori*, Naples ed., 1844, III, pp. 143 ff. Modern investigators have published documents which prove that in 1616, when a boy of about fifteen and the apprentice of Jerónimo Espinosa, Do matriculated in the *colegio de pintores* of Valencia, that he was not a native of the *reyno* of Valencia, and that in May, 1626 he was married in Naples to Grazia de Rosa, sister of the painter Pacecco de Rosa, in a ceremony witnessed by Ribera. See L. Tramoyeres Blasco, "Un colegio de pintores en Valencia," *Archivo de Investigaciones Históricas*, II (1911), 521; "El pintor J. J. de Espinosa," *Archivo de Arte Valenciano*, I (1915), 130; L. Salazar, "Documenti inediti," *Napoli Nobilissima*, IV (1895), 187. As Do had an interesting namesake—Jean d'O, seigneur d'O, Comte d'Eu—we are tempted to speculate that he was of French origin.

¹⁵ A. Conca, *Descrizione Odeporica della Spagna*, Parma, 1793, I, 132, records a work of this sort in the new Palacio Real, Madrid, ascribing it to Van Dyck. It may have been this very work (Prado, No. 1316), which I suppose to be a product of the School of Granada where the styles of Ribera and Van Dyck were frequently blended.

¹⁶ *Ribera in the Collection of the Hispanic Society of America*, New York, 1926, pp. 9-14 and illustrations. For the *Cleopatra*, not herein mentioned, A. L. Mayer, *op. cit.*, pl. 34.

²⁷ N.B. that Mayer's pl. 31 reproduces a copy, inferior and late. Brief comment on the resemblance was made by F. E. Washburn Freund in "The Universal Art of Ribera," *International Studio*, LXXXIV (1926), 19. Ribera painted other *Inmaculadas*: that of S. Isabel, Madrid; that of Count Harrach's Gallery, Vienna; that of Wiesloch (a fragment); that of S. Pascual, Madrid (lost) which is perhaps identical with that which the Marqués de Salamanca sold in Paris in 1867 for 28,700 fr. (also lost).

²⁸ De Dominici, *op. cit.*, pp. 113 ff., knew that Ribera had a *stilo dolce* as well as his normal *stilo tagliente*; but, since he knew nothing of the chronology of Ribera's works, he invented a false theory to account for the two styles.

²⁹ E. Tormo, "El retablo de la Inmaculada de Monterrey," *Boletín de Sociedad Española de Excursiones*, XXIV (1916), 17 ff., and illustration facing p. 18. N.B. the comment on the lateral pictures of the retablo and the tentative attribution of these to Cavedoni, Domenichino, l'Orbetto, and an anonymous Fleming. Cf. J. Camón Aznar, *Guía de Salamanca*, Madrid, 1932, pp. 72 ff., and *Enciclopedia Espasa*, LIII, article on Salamanca, pp. 126 f.

³⁰ The Countess was her husband's cousin and the sister of the Conde-Duque de Olivares. D. A. Parrino in the collection of manuscripts entitled *Teatro . . . de' Vicere del Regno di Napoli*, Naples, 1770, II, 29 ff., says that in 1634 she founded a convent under the title of S. Maria Maddalena for the service of Spanish ladies. A census taken in 1614 informs us that a convent of this titular and of the Augustinian order was already in existence. Perhaps the Countess became the benefactress of an institution which had once been a refuge of *maddalene*, stipulating that it should henceforth become a community of Spanish noblewomen, and intending, in the event of widowhood, to end her days there. Her predecessor, the Vicereine, Condesa de Lemos, had thus assumed the habit of S. Chiara.

³¹ She was the daughter of Baltasar de Zúñiga, not of Manuel.

³² Monterrey's youngest sister, Catalina, was a professed nun of the *Agustinas Recoletas* of Salamanca. When, in 1626, their church was struck by lightning, the Count seized the double opportunity to build a new edifice for them and a monument to his family. The construction required about ten years. See B. Dorado, *Compendio histórico de la ciudad de Salamanca*, Salamanca, 1776, p. 440. A second sister, María, died young, and Inés, the eldest, became the wife of Olivares. Their mother was Inés de Velasco y Aragón.

³³ Identification of the *Immaculate* and the *Bride of Solomon* can be traced to fifth century authors and appears in the Office of the Conception sanctioned in 1477.

³⁴ His cousin and brother-in-law, Olivares (b. 1587 in Rome, where his father was ambassador), studied theology at Salamanca.

³⁵ In the inventory of the collection of Isabel Farnese at La Granja (1746), the *Penitent* was catalogued as a work of Veronese. Perhaps the compilers knew that the *Magdalen* of S. Agustín, Salamanca, was attributed to Carletto Veronese. At the Prado, No. 1105 was attributed to Murillo and later reclassified (by Madrazo?) with the commentary: "A serious and extensive study has borne out the conviction that it is an original of Ribera." Nevertheless, the editors of the newest catalogue (1933) reserve the right to doubt, and Dr. Mayer, though he ascribes the New York *Ecstasy* to Giordano and clearly perceives the obvious similarity, attributes the *Penitent* "to the transition to Murillo's vaporous style" or—on second thought—to Alonso Cano's hand. That the suave and sentimental modes of Ribera and Murillo are compatible is not surprising in view of the fact that the younger artist used the Valencian's *Inmaculadas* as models for his own. The fact that Murillo, Carreño, Antolínez, and Palomino in certain of their *Purísimas* seem to have borrowed simultaneously from the *Conception* of Salamanca and the *Magdalen* of New York may indicate that these artists had the opportunity to see these works in close proximity. See A. L. Mayer, *La Pintura Española*, Madrid, 1928, Figs. 258, 357, 371, 390, and cf. and *Jusepe de Ribera*, p. 190.

N.B. The photographs reproduced in this article were obtained through the courtesy of The Hispanic Society of America.



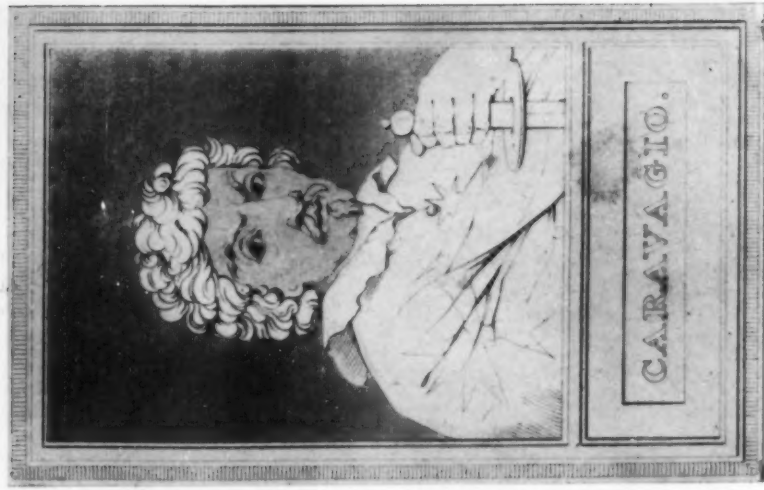
Fig. 3. JUSEPE DE RIBERA, *Ecstasy of the Magdalen*
Madrid, Academia de San Fernando



Fig. 4. JUSEPE DE RIBERA, *Santa Teresa de Jesús*
Seville, Private Collection



*Fig. 1. NICCOLO RENIERI, Young Man with a Sword
Detroit Institute of Arts*



*Fig. 2. CARAVAGGIO, Self-Portrait
Engraved by G. Cooke*

RENIERI, SARACENI AND THE MEANING OF CARAVAGGIO'S INFLUENCE *By E. P. RICHARDSON*

"ALL the problems of art," Delacroix noted in his journal for 1847, "were solved in the sixteenth century." The remark is worth quoting, not as a final judgment on art history but as showing the conviction of a great painter that the language of painting—light, tone, color, space, form, movement—remained substantially the same in his own day as it was in the Renaissance. It is a good thing to return occasionally to such a remark. It reminds us that the many changes of style in the baroque took place, after all, within the frame of the coloristic tradition established by the sixteenth century. And if the development of art did not stop with the Renaissance but continued more richly and vigorously than ever, it means that the progress of art does not lie in novelties of technique but in the imagination. The changes which took place in style during the great development of seventeenth century painting were not fundamental changes: it was the development of new imaginative impulses which was fundamental.

This is of course no new doctrine. But the great change that took place in painting, beginning with Caravaggio, was accomplished by such a dramatic alteration in style that it is easy to think of it in terms of style alone. The tendency to explain Caravaggio's influence as a revolutionary movement in style has grown less as recent study has shown how deeply indebted he was for the elements of his chiaroscuro and his naturalism to his sixteenth century predecessors. And it is significant that the explanation of his art by the stylistic terms "naturalism" and "chiaroscuro" goes back finally to the contemporary artists who did not like his work, and who thus judged it from the outside, without sympathy. Annibale Caracci's description of his work as "a great contrast of light and shade and a too great fidelity to nature, something without propriety, with little grace and less intellect,"¹ is only a partial truth because it is an external judgment. Caravaggio was a naturalist—yet his work is so stylized that, as McComb remarked,² a good argument could be made out for considering him as the last classicist. He introduced a tendency toward genre and subjects of low life—but, as recent investigators have emphasized, a very large part of his work consists of big altarpieces, in which he continued the ideal subject matter and the lofty, tragic tone characteristic of the great Italian tradition. One would almost say, the tendency of recent studies is to show that

in his stylistic innovations he adapted the work of his predecessors as much as did the Carracci, the "eclectics." Yet certainly in some sense he was a revolutionary. His work aroused an outburst of activity that affected the whole course of European painting and produced one of the most interesting moments in the history of painting. The enthusiasm which spread from Caravaggio's example throughout the studios not only of Rome but of Europe, is easy to see in its external aspect; but its inner essence is less easily grasped.

One fact of great significance is Caravaggio's ability to arouse other artists to independent work. As Herman Voss pointed out,³ his influence was felt more widely than that of artists like Rembrandt or Velasquez, whom we are accustomed to place on a higher level. Even a painter like Rubens, who enjoyed an international fame and who trained besides a considerable number of assistants, did not have an effect on the world of art comparable to that of this man who mingled relatively little with other artists. The point to be emphasized is that even the closest followers of Caravaggio are of a far more diverse character than we are accustomed to find grouped about a dominating personality. The artists of Rembrandt's circle, for instance, form a generally homogeneous group, out of which only Carel Fabritius can be said to have developed an independent personality. Caravaggio's followers — the two Gentileschi, Saraceni, Renieri, Manfredi, Borgianni, Valentin de Boullogne — do not form a group of such character. Sometimes they used Caravaggio's chiaroscuro, sometimes not. Some painted genre subjects with naturalistic detail, others painted ideal subjects.

One way of approach to the nature of the enthusiasm inspired by Caravaggio, is to see the reaction of the artists in his circle. Few examples of certain of these men have found their way to this country, and they are in themselves such interesting artists, that it seems worth while to note four pictures by Niccolo Renieri and Carlo Saraceni which are available to American students.⁴

The Repentant Magdalen (Fig. 4) by Niccolo Renieri (Nicholas Regnier, c. 1590-1667) was given to the Detroit Institute of Arts some years ago by Mrs. Trent McMath. It is one of the pictures which Voss unearthed from an old attribution to Caravaggio in his reconstruction of Renieri's work,⁵ and is an excellent example of the quite personal style this Franco-Flemish artist created out of Caravaggio's inspiration. Renieri never saw Caravaggio. He was born at Maubeuge about 1590 and first studied at Antwerp under Abraham Janssens. About 1615 he appeared at Rome in the circle of the Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, who had been the first patron of Caravaggio. Renieri's con-

nection with the *tenebroso* style was apparently with Manfredi, the Roman painter whom French and Flemish art students in Rome seem to have favored. When the accession of the Barberini pope, Urban VIII, in 1623, brought another taste into power, Renieri went to Venice, where he spent the remainder of his life. Later in life he came under the influence of the Bolognese school; the best period of his work was however that of his Roman style.

This *Magdalen* belongs to the earlier period when he was both closest to Caravaggio and at the same time most personal. The still-life objects around the saint are painted with a Flemish realism, but in the flowing movement of the girl's figure the vitality and drama of *tenebrism* are tempered by elegance and its energy softened by a dreamy languor. The strong contrasts of light and dark are given their full force, but held in a fine unity. The girl's pale skin is painted with charming luminosity and with a peculiar clean, flowing and graceful brushstroke that defines the forms clearly and gives the skin the appearance of having been massaged and oiled. The reds of the robe and the browns of the skull, book and ointment jar, form an intermediate stage of middle tones between the creamy light and the opaque dark of the shadow. The grace of gesture and radiance of light suggest the romantic painter whose remark introduced this essay. But it would be unjust to Renieri to suggest that the resemblance goes further. There is none of the curious detachment between the energetic plastic movement of the body and the calm of the unmoved spirit which impresses one in Delacroix's religious art. Renieri's figures exist with an admirable unity of form and spirit; and he shows himself in such a picture to have created an interesting combination of energy and elegance.

Marco Boschini, the historian of the Venetian baroque whose *Carta del Navegar Pitoresco* was published at Venice in 1660, while Renieri was still living, is one of our chief sources of information about him. He praises Renieri's grace of manner, which was worthy he says of the head of a state. But in his art he mentions principally the reality and elegance of his portraits. Almost none of these have come to light. There are two group portraits in the Academy at Venice, one of three Inquisitors and the other of three Avogadori, transferred from the halls of the Inquisitors and the Avogaria in the Ducal Palace. There is also the admirable *Self-Portrait at his Easel* (Fig. 3), published by Voss ten years ago,⁶ filled with the grandiose and romantic spirit of the early Roman baroque. Beyond these we have only religious and allegorical subjects.

The *Self-Portrait*, which is now in this country, is the link between his religious work, like the *Magdalen*, and a portrait of a *Young Man With a Sword*

(Fig. 1) which I believe can also be given to Renieri.⁷ This was recently presented to the Detroit Institute of Arts by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Reichhold, and was attributed to Caravaggio. The attribution is understandable for obvious reasons. It is also clearly related to a lost *Self-Portrait* of Caravaggio, holding a sword and wearing the cross of Malta, engraved by G. Cooke in London in 1807 (Fig. 2).⁸ The connection in pose between the two is full of suggestion, but the same traits separate the portrait in Detroit from Caravaggio as those which distinguish his ideal compositions. The color in the Detroit portrait is warm and luminous, while the *Self-Portrait* and the *Magdalen* are cool and luminous; but otherwise the connection with the *Self-Portrait* is very close. The smooth lights on the skin that make it seem to be oiled, the clear flowing brushstrokes that delineate the eyes, ears and corners of the mouth, the manner of brushing the dark paint of the eyebrows and hair into the light tone of the skin, are all in the characteristic handwriting of the artist. So is the touch of dreamy languor in the large dark eyes and the suavity and elegance which temper the baroque ardor of the portrait. These are Renieri's personal traits, which constitute his own Franco-Flemish contribution to the movement founded by Caravaggio.

The impressive quality of this portrait does not come from the sitter, who is a youth of no particular force or intelligence. It lies rather in the artist's vision. It was a bold and simple way of seeing, approaching nature by way of the dramatic force of the lighting, the striking simplicity of the black, white and brown color harmony, the hint of movement in the pose, all held within a fine pictorial unity. The figure is painted with great plasticity in deep shadowy space and is brought so close to the picture plane that the observer's impression is one of looking through an opening straight into the eyes of a person who is unexpectedly near. This sense of physical nearness and vitality transforms the sixteenth century Venetian portrait form (upon which this is based), for it replaces the noble calm and detachment of the Venetian portrait with a sense of actuality. This is the same transformation of Venetian forms that we find in Caravaggio's work. The link between the two—a vision of the dramatic vitality that is in life, simply because it is life—was the discovery of Caravaggio, and the source of that excitement of discovery which fills his work. One might borrow to describe it the words of Cicero on Verres which Emerson used to express the amount of meaning in life—*dum tacet, clamat*. While silent, it cries aloud. Emerson, like the great artists of the Renaissance, had a remarkable sense of the grandeur of human personality, of ideas, of history; but he was



*Fig. 3. NICCOLO RENIERI, Self-Portrait at his Easel
New York Art Market*



Fig. 4. NICCOLO RENIERI, *The Repentant Magdalen*
Detroit Institute of Arts



Fig. 5. CARLO SARACENI, *Susannah and the Elders*
Detroit Institute of Arts

equally ready to discard all that for nature. The day is good, he said, in which we have the most perceptions. There are times when the cawing of a crow, or the sight of a weed, a snowflake, or a farmer planting in his fields, convey to the perceptive mind things equal to the suggestions of the most majestic phenomena or the most profound books. Perhaps something like this was what Caravaggio felt when, as the famous anecdote relates, they showed him two famous statues he ought to copy, and in reply he pointed silently to the people going by in the street. *Dum tacet, clamat*: there is life, so beautiful, so alive, so mysterious, yet no more than simple actuality! It was the excitement of this imaginative perception, embodied in works of great power, that drew other artists after him and produced the outburst of creative activity. Without it, his chiaroscuro and descriptive detail would have been merely an empty trick.

One can measure the stature of the artists in Caravaggio's circle by the degree to which they responded to his imagination rather than his style. Carlo Saraceni (1581-1620), the Venetian painter who was so close to him that he imitated his dramatic personality, copying his mode of dress and going about Rome followed by a big dog like Caravaggio's, was none the less farther from him spiritually than was Renieri, who never saw him. A small painting on copper by Saraceni, *Susannah and the Elders*, (Fig. 5) came recently into the Detroit collection.⁹ It was in an American private collection and has never before been published. So far as I know, it is the only example of his work in a public collection in this country.

Saraceni was a Venetian but most of his life, from 1592 onward, was spent in Rome. He was influenced both by Caravaggio and, in small pictures like the present example, by Elsheimer. But he was by temperament unable to assimilate the dramatic vitality of Caravaggio's imagination: his response was to his style. But that this alone was not enough foundation for a life, is shown by the uncertain and shifting character of his art. Saraceni's mind returned always to the pageant element in Venetian painting, to splendid masses of figures in rich flowing garments, conceived in the graceful detached spirit of Veronese. In this picture the dramatic vitality is toned down to the animation of a charmingly told myth, a tale delightful enough to hold the attention but with no meaning but its charm. Saraceni avoided the use of deep space and the vigorously foreshortened bodies cut across by the picture's edge that (precisely as in the work of Degas) give an impression of actuality to the works of the other Tenebrists. His most important figure is complete within the picture; only secondary details are cut off by the frame. The figures form

a graceful frieze across in front of the landscape. The mood of his picture is poetic but it is not the poetry of actuality. It is the pictorial poetry of Venetian color and light. The light bathes the figure of Susannah, shines on the whites and yellows, reds and greens of the figures, wraps the whole group in a luminous glow against the dark shadows of the landscape. It is a variation of Caravaggio's style, combining it with Venetian elements toward a wholly pictorial aim. Charming as such an art is, it proved too slight an impulse to sustain him on this level. In 1619 Saraceni returned to Venice to paint one of the historical decorations in the hall of the Grand Council in the Ducal Palace. Before he could complete the commission, he died of the spotted typhus at the age of thirty-nine. The decoration was completed and signed by his pupil, LeClerc. In its crowded, confused and tiresome masses of figures there is no trace of the delicate, simple and quiet art he practised under Caravaggio's influence. There is a pleasant talent revealed in the Detroit picture. It is the work of one who had a sensitive feeling for style. But Caravaggio's discoveries could give strength only to those with imagination to grasp the poetry of actuality.

It was no accident that this discovery coincided with the life of Galileo. The European peoples were to discover a power in the seventeenth century to look more deeply into simple actuality and to find greater meaning in its contemplation, than any civilization had acquired before. In painting it formed the imaginative inspiration of artists, as in other fields it formed the inspiration of the great philosopher-scientists of the age. The interpretation we place upon the movement of realism that began with Caravaggio (which has colored the whole tradition of our art) is thus a large question, for it involves some of the most distinctive and characteristic traits of our civilization. Is that ability to "go to nature, take the thing in your hands, look and see for yourself" which we consider a great intellectual force if it takes the form of science, an anti-intellectual and anti-spiritual force in the inspiration of the artist? Or is it the imaginative exploration, in the field of emotional experience, of that same grasp upon actuality which is one of the most creative aspects of our civilization? It seems to me the latter, and as such capable of being original and imaginative in the highest degree, enlarging our perceptions of life and enriching experience. But the twentieth century has been full of voices not only denying it any imaginative character, but using it to accuse our whole civilization of lack of soul. According to my interpretation of western art, this is a characteristic example of the degree to which the twentieth century world has misread the meaning of its own civilization.

¹ Quoted by A. McComb, *The Baroque Painters of Italy*, 1934, p. 39.

² McComb, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³ Voss, *Malerei des Barock in Rom*, 1924, p. 446.

⁴ There is also an interesting *Still-Life with Figures* in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, of which the still-life has been tentatively attributed to Renieri. As I have not seen the picture, I can only refer to the museum's publication of it in the *Bulletin*, XXVIII (1939), 154, which mentions the attribution to Renieri with great reserve.

⁵ Voss, *op. cit.*, p. 144, and in *Zeitschrift für bild. Kunst*, LVIII (1924-25), 122.

⁶ Voss, *Zeitschrift für bild. Kunst*, LXV (1931-32), 161.

⁷ Canvas: h: 28¾; w: 24¼ inches. Acc. no. 41.56.

⁸ It is an interesting question whether this was engraved from a picture then in existence in England or from the engraving in Bellori. If the former is the case, the original ought someday to appear.

⁹ Oil on copper: h: 18; w: 14 inches. Acc. no. 41.89.

THE EARLY WORKS OF ERASMUS GRASSER

By PAUL FRANKL

ERASMUS GRASSER is the best known mediaeval sculptor of Munich. His fame is based on the small figures carved in wood of *Moriska Dancers* in the old Munich Town Hall (Fig. 1).¹ Halm, the author of a biography of Grasser, concluded on the basis of archives and records, that Grasser must have been born about 1450. Therefore, in 1480 when the *Moriska Dancers* were placed in position, the Master was about thirty years old.² They were obviously not his first works, and the question arose whether it might be possible to find other works by Grasser, but a search proved unsuccessful. The archives revealed only that Grasser had furnished other decorative works for the same room in the Town Hall; a sun for the ceiling and shields for a mural frieze. The sun is not preserved but the shields are, in part. The frieze shows a hundredfold reproduction of a design, obviously by Grasser, but executed by his assistants.

The old Munich Town Hall was built between 1470 and 1477 by the identical Master Jörg who had commenced the Frauenkirche in 1468, and it is probable that he recommended the sculptor, Grasser, for the Town Hall's decorations because he had learned to value him as his collaborator on the Frauenkirche. However, according to Halm, the only works for the Frauenkirche attributed to Grasser up to the present time were the choir stalls, completed about 1512. It is improbable that they were commissioned before the church building was finished in 1488. If Grasser did do work for the Frauenkirche before the *Moriska Dancers* of 1480, it must have been structural sculpture, plastic work that was in fact part of the building. Neither the figures of the porch, nor those on the pillars are of this type. They are detached and for the most part date from after 1488.

On the other hand, the consoles at the starting points of the ribs and the keystones of the ceiling vaults are attached to the structure (Fig. 2). The keystones are of only local historic interest. The figures of the rib consoles are more interesting. They adorn the imposts of the arcade arches, between the twenty-four detached pillars, those of the dividing arches of the twenty-five chapels and the four starting points of the ceiling vaults in the chapels. Then there is a single console which supports the ribs at the east end of the center axis, a bust of *God the Father* (Fig. 3); and two consoles at the west end



*Fig. 1. ERASMUS GRASSNER, Moriska Dancer
Munich, Old Town Hall*



Fig. 2. Frauenkirche, Munich, 1468-1473



*Fig. 3. FIRST MASTER,
Console at east end of center axis:
God the Father
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 4. SECOND MASTER,
Console in 12th chapel, north, on
window side, facing east
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 5. SECOND MASTER,
Console on 10th pillar, south,
facing east,
Munich, Frauenkirche*

which have been called portraits of Master Jörg and his assistant. In all, there are 197 consoles with plastic ornament.

These consoles are not entirely unknown to visitors to the Frauenkirche. A good view of the last two described can be had from the organ loft. Others enjoyed a certain popularity because of their humor, but art historians have ignored them. This is explained partly by the fact that without scaffolding the consoles are hardly visible. As they themselves are only about eight inches high and are placed about seventy-five feet above the floor, it is difficult to distinguish them in detail. I became aware of them in 1929 when scaffolding as high as, and above these figures, was erected in the choir chapels to permit me to photograph stained glass. In 1932 scaffolding was put up throughout the interior of the church, and I do not understand why the consoles even then remained unnoticed. I was able to examine only the consoles in the west half for a few days. It was impossible to photograph them all as I had hoped, and I have photographs of but a third of them at my disposal.³ This research must consequently remain provisional until scaffolding is again erected in the church.

The iconographic program of the consoles is clear. *God the Father* (Fig. 3) looks down from the middle of the east end at all the other consoles and the throng of living human beings below. The consoles at the north end represent: Pope, Cardinal, King, Duke; and on the south side: Judge, Bishops, Abbots, and Monks; and then in far greater number, workmen and craftsmen. The idea is, therefore, the representation of the professions and trades, a theme which originated in portrayals of the last judgment. Possibly based on word of mouth tradition from the time when the church was built, those interested in art when discussing the consoles, agree in seeing them as portraits of all the masters, assistants and apprentices who were involved in the construction of the Frauenkirche.⁴

As the plan of the church was decided on in 1468, a master was probably commissioned immediately to execute the 197 consoles. This master could not possibly have been Grasser, for if he was born "around 1450," he was then still either a wandering student or almost an assistant to a master. This master was unquestionably an older man who probably started the work with the most important figure of God the Father, continuing with the Pope, King, etc., but this Master of the console of God the Father alone was hardly able to produce 197 consoles in five years. Since we know that the church was completed in 1473 as far as the impost line of the vaults, the consoles may definitely

be dated between 1468 and 1473. Every master in Munich at that time had the right to engage two apprentices. Calculating that each of them produced one-third of the consoles during those years, each sculptor would be responsible for about sixty-five consoles, or thirteen consoles yearly. It seems to me entirely plausible that experienced sculptors used an average of four weeks working time on each console. On more precise analysis, it is possible to distinguish more than these three artists. Besides the Master of the console of God the Father there was probably a second master who created the faithful portraits (Figs. 4 and 5);⁵ Grasser was probably assistant to one of these two. In this article I must necessarily concentrate on the works of Grasser.

After becoming familiar with examples of the work by the rather insignificant Master and by the Second Master who scorns all humor and merely aims at likeness in portraiture, a group of other consoles emerge as utterly different in character. First, they are full of motion. One of these console figures, for example, shows the entire figure of a nude boy (twelfth chapel south, facing west), probably one of the assistants (Fig. 6). He is kneeling, supporting his left arm, bent at the elbow, vertically against his knee. With his right foot he braces himself against the pillar, while the sole of his left foot with the flexing of the shank, fits close to the rib console. The little fellow carries the heavy console on the nape of his neck, his head, and his outstretched right arm. Of course, none of this can be logically explained. The figure is in fact kneeling in the air. In contrast to the rather flat busts of the Master of the console of God the Father, this indicates an interest in three-dimensionality. The whole figure is diagonally planned. This assistant does not furnish any details of the body, but is interested only in reproducing the movement of the torso, the head and all the limbs, anticipating the basic theme of the *Moriska Dancers*.

The figures supporting the dividing arch of the eleventh chapel south, are intended as props, brackets. They jut out from the pillar at the hips. One of them carries the arch on his back with his hands crossed over his breast (Fig. 8); another bears the weight with his breast, bracing his hands against the impost (Fig. 9). The curls of his flowing hair fall on his shoulders in a most unusual way, like a long cockscomb. It is doubtful that these figures are portraits. Portrait figures by the Second Master are visible directly above the supports of the chapel vaults. But the artistic purpose of these supple bodies of real caryatids is to achieve full mobility of the body and not of the face.

The *Moriska Dancers* are not only brilliant examples of movement, but of facial expression as well. My reason for seeing Grasser's hand in this group

of consoles is also because their physiognomies anticipate the *Moriska Dancers*. This is most apparent in the figure on the third pillar north, facing east (Fig. 7). The head of this figure can be placed between the two heads of *Moriska Dancers* reproduced by Halm in his book in plate 10 at the top of the page; strong slightly curved nose, short upper lip, firm chin and powerful neck muscles; the eyebrow arches are also muscular; the forehead is furrowed vertically at the root of the nose; the hair hangs over the brow in heavy waves; the upper part of the body emerges almost horizontally from the pillar; the backward slant of the upper arms is visible and the forearms, disappearing in the pillar, may be imagined as carrying a weight. The head is markedly turned to one side. This position alone expresses a fleeting emotion. This is unquestionably a portrait, incomparably deeper psychologically than the likenesses by the Second Master. The figure looks down, not with superiority, but with a kindly, somewhat melancholy sympathy for the human beings below. The mouth is so expressive, its corners so sensitively fine, one feels that it would be possible to talk with this model at length about the riddle of human life. Perhaps he was a young master who had experienced sorrow and was strong enough to overcome it. If a portrait can be said to reveal the artist's attitude toward his model, then here there was surely affectionate respect.

Grasser's relation to some of his other models was quite different. There is one figure (fourth chapel, north, facing west) (Fig. 10) whose tongue protrudes slightly, whose brow is violently contracted; his short and knobby nose gives him a somewhat ignoble expression; his hand is clenched against his heart. This is a rough but good-natured fellow, hardly older than Grasser himself was at the time. Their relationship was such that they could poke fun at each other. The disposition of the folds of the sleeve also seems to me characteristic of Grasser. Irritated, disheveled and ugly is the head on the ninth pillar, north, facing west (Fig. 11). Probably Grasser had quarreled with his subject and perpetuated that unpleasant moment to revenge himself.

These two were examples of the more primitive characters around Grasser, but he had quite different models at his disposal, spiritually as superior as the friend of humanity described before. Among them was the model of the console in the third chapel, north, facing west (Fig. 12). He stretches more than half of his body out of the pillar; his garment is foldless, close fitting, and the round form of his torso and limbs is much simplified. The head, however, is remarkable, turned energetically sideward with the expression of a man who observes intently. His low brow is covered by the round workman's

cap, so that in this particular the horizontal predominates. But the long face is made still longer by a chin beard, giving the otherwise shaved face the appearance of having been made into a type by the model himself. Here is a man who thinks well of himself; an austere personality, methodical, almost pedantic, inexorable in his demands on himself and others; yes, almost a fanatic. Perhaps I see too much in that face and others will interpret it differently. I shall not argue with them, but insist only that the busts of the Second Master, however sincere they are, offer no room for character analysis, and in those of the Master of the console of God the Father, there is no character to analyze. The artistic approach of these three sculptors was fundamentally different.

How remarkably the assistant succeeded in revealing the characters of each of his models! The head of the console on the ninth pillar, south, facing east (Fig. 14) is turned to one side, but the round, amiable face gazes at something with dreamy feeling and healthy sensuality. He might have been in love and full of longing. He might also impress one as being a person capable of enjoying himself in silent contemplation. This console has no arms, but it is not only the position of the head which reveals the inner feeling; every feature of the face gives the sculptor an opportunity to express his subjective opinion of his model. The Second Master aimed at objectivity, the First Master sought to represent the typical. The assistant, on the contrary, depicts his models in intensive and transitory relation to their environment.

The so-called foreman on the tower pillar near the organ loft is also by this sculptor (Fig. 15). The head, not in itself exaggeratedly big, makes an enormous impression because of its leonine mane. This man is represented in full length; he kneels in the air (like the nude boy); his hands are braced against his thighs and his shanks slant upwards so that the soles of his shoes are visible from above, pointed shoes in the style of 1470 which curve upwards like tongues. The posture of this figure is factually impossible. It is the product of the artist's creative imagination, capable of playing with the movements of the human body. Perhaps it was really intended as a joke and the tradition is justified that in this figure the foreman is portrayed and that he was a man who had a Samsonlike shock of hair, a good gymnast employing his gymnastic ability as builder, carpenter, and roofer for the benefit of Christianity, as well as to increase his own self-esteem. His face is neither beautiful nor ugly, nor is it a caricature. I would assume that the sculptor had respect for this model even though he considered him a little ridiculous.



*Fig. 6. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console in
12th chapel, south, facing west
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 7. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console on 3rd pillar, north,
facing east
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 8. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console in
11th chapel, south
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 9. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console in
11th chapel, south
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 10. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console in 4th chapel, north,
facing west
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 11. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console on 9th pillar, north,
facing west
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 12. ERASMUS GRASSER, Console in 3rd chapel, north,
facing west
Munich, Frauenkirche*



*Fig. 13. UNKNOWN ASSISTANT,
Console in 12th chapel north,
window wall, facing west
Munich, Frauenkirche*

I believe that the freedom in the creation of complicated movements of the body and the physiognomy of these consoles justify ascribing them to Grasser. But one must add emphatically that the quality of these works evidence the hand of Grasser. This quality is inherent in the sculptor's personality, which is overflowing with an understanding of so many conditions of the human soul. He recognizes them in his own sensitive young soul as well as in his fellow-men. He need only select from this treasure within him which will never be exhausted. It is not necessary for him to have a superior model. They are craftsmen like the clowns in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, an excellent cross-section of the people, for at that time the middle class was still representative. Naturally they are not very noble, but they are also not common. They are the rank and file of the unpretentious, the inglorious and obscure, who are destined to make history with the industry of their hands and their peaceful work. In their modesty they are wiser than the individuals revealed by the glaring light of history. They all have the same vitality, the same readiness to savor the simple pleasures of life fully, without heroism, but not without zest. As a whole, they represent life in many phases; kindness and intelligence; physical courage; the industry of the active life and the dreaminess of the contemplative life; fanaticism and melancholy lethargy; all these qualities were inherent in these models for every sculptor to reproduce, but for us they are creations of Grasser who himself was one of them. A portrait or self-portrait of Grasser should really be found among these figures.

The peculiar quality of this work as sculpture lies in the artist's unlimited ability to express psychic differences in stone, in his creative ideas for ever-changing body positions, and in the varied mobility of the faces in contrast to the simplicity of the treatment of the garments, as illustrated in the *Moriska Dancers*. Each time the sculptor chose a definite spiritual theme, he concentrated on that alone and reproduced the whole personality that way, in the pattern of the subtle inner facial expression, the body movements and the careless garments. Grasser's talents far exceeded the demands made on him by these works. In them a creative power squandered itself, a young assistant lavished his creative imagination, not because he wished his work to be seen, but because everything commonplace was foreign to him. The joy of his life is not in what other people may say about his work, but in the work itself. Almost the same gayety and champagne mood which appears later in the *Moriska Dancers* sparkles in these works. His master created types of representatives of professions; the Second Master created the superficial exterior

of human beings, but Grasser created human beings based on his knowledge of himself and of other men.

In order to confirm attributing this work to Grasser, it is essential to ascertain whether this group of consoles can be ascribed to any other Munich or Bavarian sculptor. The answer is no. It is only necessary to read further in Halm's book in which this specialist in Bavarian sculpture of the fifteenth century sought in vain for a master in the Bavaria of that time who was at all equal to Grasser. It is sufficient to point to the *Memorial to Bishop Johannes von Tulpeck* in the Munich Frauenkirche (Fig. 18). The date of this work is definitely fixed by the Bishop's death in 1476. It was considered by far the most important plastic work of the period in Bavaria. Halm thinks it a careful and arresting work, but utterly without power.⁶ It is, in fact, a flat work in every sense. The sculptor's name is unknown.

There was at that time in Munich a sculptor named Hans Haldner and Hartig believes it possible that Haldner was Grasser's master,⁷ but that is a mistake. Haldner is the sculptor of the *Stiftergrab* in Tegernsee and of the *Tomb of Albrecht III* in Andechs. He received his last payment for that work in 1467. There is no connection of any kind between these works and Grasser. Haldner, moreover, cannot be identified with the Master of the console of God the Father and just as little with the memorial to Bishop Von Tulpeck.

There are two more names which Hartig has unearthed in his excellent search of the archives; the sculptor Jakob who was active from 1477 to 1500 and the sculptor Jörg who worked from 1482 to 1486; but we do not know the dates of their births or their works. Unquestionably, a careful skeptic might say that the master of these consoles, whom I believe to be Grasser, is not Grasser but an unidentified man whose other works have disappeared, a sort of double of Grasser's. But why should we invent this double when there are so many facts which point to Grasser? Apart from that, there was versatility in Grasser's art. Only five years after the completion of the *Moriska Dancers*, he produced the *Memorial to the Aresinger* in the Peterskirche in Munich. Halm comments on this justifiably, that these are "two works of such inner power and of such strongly contrasting character that one can scarcely believe them to have been created by the same artist, if it were not for the archives." These words are certainly not a license for reckless claims of authorship, particularly after Halm himself had saved Grasser's work from being falsely attributed to other artists. This quotation merely rejects the claim that the consoles must completely accord in their style with the later *Moriska Dancers*.

Between the time the consoles were completed in 1473 and the probable commencement of the *Moriska Dancers* in 1478, five long years intervened. But the consoles and the *Moriska Dancers* are a development of the theme of the consoles. The consoles are sketches of the *Moriska Dancers*. If attributing this work to Grasser is sufficiently convincing, it is possible to approach the question of Grasser's artistic descent with more confidence than heretofore. In the group of consoles which I consider works of Grasser, I include that on the ninth pillar, north, facing east (Fig. 16), which represents a man with a workman's cap leaning forward; the expression of his face is exalted; he looks like a soapbox orator protesting. This impression is strengthened by the movement of his right arm which is bent across his chest, as if in a gesture of defense. Where had Grasser seen anything of that kind?

My belief that Haldner was not Grasser's master is based on my knowledge of the training of the artists of that time. They entered a workshop in early youth, at the age of about twelve. Halm surmises that Grasser's training was at Schmidmuhlen, his birthplace in the Oberpfalz, or at Regensburg, the nearest town where a sculptor's workshop might have been located. The first period of study ended when the young man was sixteen. Then three years of wandering (*wanderschaft*) were required before he was allowed to become an assistant. He wandered through Germany on foot to find out what had been accomplished in his field in the country, for at that time no other means existed for an artist to inform himself, and to note in his sketchbook the things which impressed him as important for his future work.

As the young man had grown up among artists and in his travels could secure information from older people, assistants and masters, and also from other young wandering students, as to where the best and most recent achievements in his type of work might be found, unquestionably, he must have visited Alsace, for Strassburg was at that time the seat of the foremost architectural workshops (*Bauhütten*). Schongauer was living in Alsace, as was probably Master E. S., and Nicolaus Gerhaert was working in Strassburg.

Pinder has called attention to a possible connection between Grasser and Gerhaert. He describes the *Moriska Dancers* as making the partial impression of a paraphrase of the Lichtenberger.⁸ This connection is more comprehensible after studying the consoles. The works of the two sculptors, apart from the shapes of the busts, have in common a combination of depth of three-dimensional form and of spiritual expression. I do not believe that it is necessary for me to describe and evaluate these masterpieces of Gerhaert's in this

article.⁹ The busts by Gerhaert are supposed to portray a *Prophet* and a *Sybil*, or Virgil and the Emperor's daughter, or Count Lichtenberg and his mistress, Bärbele. Never before in mediaeval sculpture was so much expressed about the inner life of models. One is immediately struck as much by the works' literary as by its plastic qualities. Worldly wisdom and shrewdness is reflected in both these heads; they are both characterized by amorality and a sovereign contempt for narrow conventional rules. Gerhaert's own attitude toward his psychological theme is entirely free from hypocritical criticism. In fact, it is characterized by a kind of benevolent good will. Grasser may have learned from this that portraits may reveal the inner life even of disreputable characters without becoming caricatures. It is apparent that with all their identity there is a great difference between Grasser and Gerhaert. The Count of Lichtenberg, a prophet, a magician or a swindler, all remain aristocrats in Gerhaert's portraits, and when an aristocrat is a fox, it seems even worse. Grasser's people are neither aristocrats nor sly foxes. They are average small citizens, as open as books. His atmosphere is not at all complicated or decadent. Besides, Grasser was then a beginner of about twenty; Gerhaert was an experienced Master, superior to Grasser at least in the delicacy and richness of his superficial surfaces. If a twenty year old independent spirit were to transpose Count Lichtenberg into his own key, he would become the popular orator described above.

Halm assumed that Grasser was born about 1450, whether a year earlier or later is immaterial. But if we assume that Grasser commenced his *wanderschaft* at sixteen and became an apprentice in 1468 at nineteen in Munich when the foundations of the Frauenkirche were laid, it is possible to reconstruct, hypothetically, the story of his youth.

The date of his birth would be 1449. Then came his student years from about 1461 to 1465, somewhere in the Upper-Palatinate or Regensburg. He wandered from 1465 to 1468 and at that time came in contact with Gerhaert. The busts on the new Chancellery in Strassburg were completed in 1464. They were the most modern works he saw and also among the best. Besides, they appealed to him because they were congenial to his particular temperament. In 1467 Gerhaert completed the *Crucifix* at Baden Baden. When Grasser himself carved a *Crucifix* for the altar at Ramersdorf, he was still under the influence of the work of Gerhaert. He had no photographs to refer to, only his own sketches of the work which he automatically translated into his own artistic idiom. Even as late as 1483 he was still affected by Gerhaert whose



Fig. 14. ERASMUS GRASSER, *Console on 9th pillar, south, facing east*
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 15. ERASMUS GRASSER, *Console on tower pillar, near organ loft*
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 16. ERASMUS GRASSER, *Console on 9th pillar, north, facing east*
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 17. ERASMUS GRASSER, *Console on 5th pillar, south (perhaps his self-portrait)*
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 18. UNKNOWN BAVARIAN MASTER,
Memorial to Bishop Johannes von Tulpeck
(d. 1476)
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 19. UNKNOWN ASSISTANT, Console on 11th pillar, south
facing west
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 20. UNKNOWN ASSISTANT, Console in
4th chapel, south
Munich, Frauenkirche



Fig. 21. UNKNOWN ASSISTANT, Console in
9th chapel, south
Munich, Frauenkirche

influence can already be discerned in the consoles on which he was working between 1468 and 1473. In the Munich workshop he was like a pike in a pool of carp and he was not generally popular. When at twenty-six he applied for the title of Master, in 1475, he was rejected by the Guild because he was "quarrelsome, confused and deceitful as he has often proven." This depressing and chastening experience probably taught him a lesson, or perhaps the rigid Guild Masters came to realize that they could be proud of this man. At any rate he received the title of Master in 1477 and in 1478 he was commissioned to decorate the hall of the old Town Hall, and in 1480 he completed the *Moriska Dancers*, expressing in these all his Dionysian exuberance, then turning to more serious themes.

This further development is known and affectionately and fairly described by Halm. It is a particularly interesting example of the style change of the last decades of the late Gothic period. For Grasser remained virtually unaffected by the approaching Renaissance. Through his activity in Bavaria he transferred the late Gothic which had developed in Alsace, to the east. A few years ago an altar by Grasser, until then unnoticed, was given publicity. It was originally intended for the Salzburg Cathedral and later was inaccessible to the public in the organ loft of the Nonnbergkirche in Salzburg. This is a work of the decade before 1490 though later than the *Moriska Dancers*. Hasse, who discovered this altar which depicts the Miracle of Pentecost, has studied closely Grasser's position as a link between Gerhaert and the German southeast.¹⁰ Gerhaert in fact also visited this district.

It is my belief that the Munich consoles confirm and make the existing theories more comprehensible. Grasser's influence on his fellow craftsmen of the Munich Frauenkirche was felt immediately. It is evidenced in actual collaboration as well as in rather superficial and labored imitation. In certain instances I am unable to determine a work's authorship; for example, that of the two monks who are so popular because one of them is smelling his finger (Fig. 20) and the other is picking his nose (Fig. 21) (fourth and ninth chapel, south). The first of the two is disposed broadly, like the consoles of the Master of God the Father. The other is in the position of the Grasser consoles, with one arm bending backward. The nose of the figure is unfortunately damaged, but the face is chiseled rather coarsely so that the satiric humor acts as a substitute for plastic quality. The garment folds are treated more gently.

A decision as to the authorship by the individual sculptors and the number of sculptors involved in this work, can be based only on good photographs of

all the consoles. In the console on the eleventh pillar, south, facing west (Fig. 19) I see an achievement of definite quality. Perhaps this is an example of the style of still another, a fourth sculptor. And to which of the now four sculptors shall we attribute the console of the twelfth chapel, north, at the window wall? Is it pure caricature, is it a product of the imagination or is it possible that one of the apprentices really had such a broad, almost negroid nose (Fig. 13)?

I am unable to answer these questions. Perhaps they will be solved by someone else. I shall be satisfied if art historians continue this research. For many years the consoles, unnoticed and cheerful, have looked down on humanity below. Only one of all these men lifts the corner of his mouth with his middle finger, an exceedingly crude popular gesture of contempt (Fig. 17). His face is individual; the eyes full of expression, and the round cap denotes the assistant. Possibly this is a self-portrait of Grasser who expresses here his opinion of some of his dear countrymen. That question, too, I am unable to answer.

¹ The Moriska Dance was a grotesque dance at that time popular throughout Europe. See Philipp Maria Halm, *Erasmus Grasser*, Augsburg, 1928, p. 131.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ The photographer to whom I here express my gratitude, wishes to remain anonymous.

⁴ Only a few consoles do not belong to this group, e.g. one with foliage.

⁵ Examples: elderly man in the twelfth chapel north, window side (Fig. 4); a noble head of a knight, tenth pillar south, facing east (Fig. 5), etc.

⁶ Halm, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁷ Otto Hartig, "Münchener Künstler und Kunstsachen I," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildende Kunst*, N.F. III (1926), 286.

⁸ W. Pinder, *Die Deutsche Plastik* (Wildpark-Potsdam, 1929), pp. 378 ff.

⁹ Otto Wertheimer, *Nicolaus Gerhaert*, Berlin, 1929.

¹⁰ Max Hasse, "Der Salzburger Altar des Erasmus Grasser," *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, LX (Berlin, 1939), 48-55.

RECENT IMPORTANT
ACQUISITIONS
OF AMERICAN COLLECTIONS



JACOPO TINTORETTO, *A Hermit or Poet* (23½" x 18½")
Princeton, Museum of Historic Art, Princeton University

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THE RECENT ACQUISITIONS

TINTORETTO: A HERMIT OR POET

From an article by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., in the *Bulletin*, of the Museum of Historic Art, Princeton University, Spring, 1942

I can find no more specific title for the superb little landscape which Mrs. Henry White Cannon has generously given to this Museum. The scene is at the edge of a forest. Much of the warm brown in the foliage was probably green—the verdigris pigment having as usual darkened—but the lighter sprays which are splashed or rather dashed on rather than painted, have retained the pale green gray tint of the *terra verde* with which they were painted. Light rays break through the trees from the upper left. The ground, which has retained some of the original greens, tingles with multiform cast shadows which seem about to move. As painting it is a magnificent example of Tintoretto's *furia*, which such finicky Florentines as Vasari disapproved.

The composition is odd, baroque rather than Renaissance. The sky occupies about a fifth of the space, the forest all the rest save for a single male figure, clothed in crimson, energetically leaning forward over several books, one of which he holds open with muscular effort. He is an author, for his portable inkstand with two quill pens is prominently displayed. He is young, has neither the nimbus nor the robes of a saint. He wears instead hose and a loose shirt. Writing is possibly laborious for him, since he has rolled up the right sleeve of his jerkin, exposing the muscular forearm. Such features make my friend and colleague, Dr. Erwin Panofsky, challenge the traditional title of St. John the Evangelist on Fatmos. Even for a Tintoretto, St. John of the Apocalypse would have to be immensely old and garbed magisterially. Dr. Panofsky suggests an obscure St. Mark the Anchorite, a suggestion I have no means of checking. In a broad if superficial search I can find in Venice no trace of a cult of St. Mark the Anchorite. But does it have to be a saint at all? May it not be rather an ardent idyllic poet actively creative in the grateful shade of the forest? And the darting shafts of sunlight, are they symbolic of spiritual or merely of poetical inspiration from on high? Or are they simply a record of an interesting optical effect? It is easier to put such questions than to answer them.

The picture is painted on a rather thin fir panel which has stood amazingly for nearly four centuries. The composition is integral, for the bare wood is preserved all around, and the

ridge of paint under or adjoining the original frame is intact on all borders. So far as I can see there is no repainting whatever, and beyond the usual darkening of the greens in the masses of foliage and the patches of blue in the sky, we see this little masterpiece in its original condition. The composition, unlike the self-contained Renaissance arrangements, tends to overlap and strain at its bounds.

St. Joseph in the *Flight to Egypt*, at San Rocco, wears precisely the costume of the figure in the Princeton picture, the plunging foreshortening of St. Joseph is another link, as is the diagonal composition with the rather small figures tending to move beyond the frame. The landscape too, in the high perspective, rather near distances, and actual handling, is quite similar to that of our picture. The *Flight to Egypt* is dated between 1583 and 1587. Titian, on whose work his discarded pupil, Tintoretto, must always have kept a shrewd eye, anticipated Tintoretto in this type of composition in the two versions of *The Agony in the Garden*, respectively in the Escorial and the Prado. Here we have the incandescent lighting, the relatively small scale of the figures and their tendency to strain at their pictorial bonds. These pictures are usually dated about 1565. An even closer compositional analogue is the *Landscape with St. Jerome*, engraved by Cornelius Cort after a drawing by Titian. Dr. Tietze, who reproduces this print, dates the original drawing after 1550. To me it seems that the date 1565 directly under Titian's signature may apply rather to the drawing than to the engraving. In any case Tintoretto must have known the print, and his picture of a poet or hermit may well have been inspired by it. However

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(9 5/8" x 10 1/4")

GIOVANNI DI PAOLO, *St. Thomas Aquinas Confounding Averroës*
St. Louis, City Art Museum

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that be, we may safely date the Princeton Tintoretto somewhere between 1585 and 1590. Apparently this sketch was never used for a big canvas. Indeed, the tiny scale of the single figure offered difficulties in any considerable enlargement of the composition. Then it is possible, even probable, that any plan for a big picture had to be put aside when in 1590 Tintoretto accepted his greatest and final task, the *Paradiso* for the Ducal Palace.

On the back of the panel, apparently in seventeenth century lettering, is *Giacomo Robusti, detto il Tintoretto*. Below is the following inventory note: *Del Po a Cajano / / della R. Guardia / / 29 Xbre. 1773* (from Poggio a Cajano in the storeroom, December 29, 1773). In short this panel came from the famous Medici Villa which ceded many fine pictures to the Uffizi a century and a half ago. This panel perhaps seemed to be too insignificant to be claimed by the directorate of the Uffizi. It came to this country from the collection of Sir Claude Alexander, Bart., Ballochmyle House, Mauchline, Scotland.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS BY GIOVANNI DI PAOLO

From an article by Perry T. Rathbone in the *Bulletin* of the City Art Museum, May-June, 1942

The life of Giovanni di Paolo is too well recorded to bear much repeating. Suffice it to say that his career was long and fruitful, that he was one of the most prolific and popular painters of his time and that, apart from his creative activity in and about Siena, his days were passed in more or less uneventful succession. He was born in Siena in 1403 and died there in 1483. Artistically Giovanni di Paolo's history is marked by the pronounced influence of his forerunners and contemporaries, and this to such a degree that he has with reason been called an eclectic painter.

The St. Thomas Aquinas has been assigned by Mr. J. Pope-Hennessy to the years ca. 1445-1450. It is a period when the influence of the quiet and gentle lyricism of Sassetta is waning in Giovanni's work and he was striving for greater sobriety. He has forgotten his love of decorative effect and his line has become severe and incisive. Even the restricted color of the painting is subdued, almost sombre.

The diminutive size of the picture would suggest that it was painted as a predella panel but there is no extant or recorded work by Giovanni di Paolo which admits such a possibility. It was first suggested by Dr. H. Gronau that the painting is the upper part of a *biccherna* cover. This view is substantiated not only by the size of the picture, but by the stamped tooling in gold leaf that edges the whole and by the thinness of the panel. Under the Republic of Siena the officers of the Treasury or *Biccherna* had an incumbency of six months. Upon retiring from office it was the long established custom to have the official registers of their terms bound under a cover especially painted with their arms and those of their colleagues. Sometimes portraits of the officers were added to the design but more frequently they were decorated with a religious or allegorical scene or the most significant political incident of the term of office. Not a few of Siena's greatest painters over a period of some three hundred years thus enriched the archives of their city. Five book covers besides the present example can be given with reason to Giovanni di Paolo. The lower part of our cover which properly

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JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, *The Red Cross Knight*
Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art

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The subject of the painting which is unusual and highly figurative is a religious tableau representing St. Thomas Aquinas as the great scholastic teacher denouncing heretical doctrines personified by the prostrate form of the Arabian philosopher Averroës. The scene is laid in a mediaeval lecture room where St. Thomas, seated in a great Gothic chair behind a high lectern, is speaking to a class of lay and monastic scholars. The Saint's auditors are symmetrically disposed in pairs; a layman and a cleric sit on benches to right and left of the podium, and the whole scene is enclosed by a high paneled wainscot. St. Thomas' texts are before him and he has come to the crux of his argument for, with knit brows and an expression of high seriousness, he holds a didactic finger, and heresy, the victim of his divine logic in the guise of Averroës, collapses miserably before him. The scholars look on amazed save one friar who gestures with confidence toward the master. Set before a beautiful reddish-gold ground, the paneling is painted in tones of saffron and the floor is pink. The scholars are clad in garments of gray, black and white and dark green accented with crimson and vermilion.

The curious subject of the painting is one that received considerable attention in Italy during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1227-1274) was revered as the scholar saint who reconciled the philosophy of the ancients, especially that of Aristotle, with the theology of the mediaeval church. Averroës, the twelfth century Mohammedan philosopher of Cordova, wrote the famous commentaries on Aristotle which virtually introduced the system of that philosopher into mediaeval Europe, and, while Averroës thus prolonged his own fame in the west long after he was forgotten by the Moslem world, he, nevertheless, was given a place of indignity by Christian painters and came to personify the heretical doctrines of Islam and heresy in general. In our picture he is to be recognized by his long beard, turban and gaberline, and by the volume of commentaries which is falling from his hand.

The humiliation of Averroës usually occurs in the theme of the triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas which depicts the saint apotheosized amidst the heavenly host, while his infidel opponent crouches beneath his feet. But St. Thomas Aquinas as the university professor, which indeed he was, is an interpretation less common. It remained for the fresh and imaginative mind of Giovanni di Paolo to portray the scene in an unstereotyped manner. He has pared his statement down to the merest essentials and set it forth with the utmost simplicity. Here is a simple but unmistakable collegiate setting; here the living symbol of the supremacy of ecclesiastical logic in the person of the holy scholar with his books; here is all of heresy overthrown in the simple prostrate form of Averroës, and here also are the communicants of the Christian church, both lay and cleric, the witnesses of the saint's divine rectitude. The gift of telling a story in fresh and simple pictorial language distinguishes much of the painting of Giovanni di Paolo. It is that quality which is perhaps the most to be admired in our little panel. One is impressed with the clarity of his statement and the simplicity of his means. And, it may be added, no small amount of its appeal proceeds from the frankness and sincerity of the artist's vision.

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By E. P. Richardson

It is of the greatest importance that Copley should be well represented in a collection like the National Gallery of Art in Washington. He was the major figure of the first period of American painting; his achievement when he is at his best, is of such quality that he is to be ranked among the great portrait painters; and he is of special interest for the history of the growth of the esthetic consciousness in America. The recent gift by Mrs. Gordon Dexter of Boston of two excellent paintings of his late period is therefore an occasion for general gratification. If there are still elements of the greatest significance in Copley's art that the National Gallery cannot show, time will take care of these lacks. And we may at least feel that the scale of his work, and the variety of compositional approach by which he adjusted the tone of his picture to the tone of the personality reproduced are now vividly represented in Washington with the *Earl Howe* from the Mellon Collection, the *Copley Family Group* (on loan), and the *Red Cross Knight* (c. 1789) and *Sir Robert Graham* (1804) now given by Mrs. Dexter.

The latter is interesting for Copley's power to create an atmosphere of pomp and circumstance in an official portrait. The *Red Cross Knight*, reproduced here, is one of the most interesting compositions of his English years. Painted about 1789, it remained in the family and came to America from the Lyndhurst Sale in the middle of the last century. It represents Copley's three children as characters from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. His eldest daughter Elizabeth, later Mrs. Gardiner Greene of Boston, is portrayed as *Faith*, and his younger daughter Mary as *Hope*. The *Red Cross Knight* is John Singleton Copley the younger, later famous as Lord Lyndhurst, three times Lord Chancellor of England. The subject is taken from the tenth canto of the first book, when the Red Cross Knight and Una are welcomed in the house of Caelia by her daughters, Hope and Faith. Copley's granddaughter, describing his life in his later years, says that "he painted from early dawn to twilight and in the evening his wife or daughter read English literature for his benefit." The taste that clothed this family group in Spenserian allegory is no doubt a reflection of those quite evenings.

The pictures of Copley's English period have recently become the object of a savage criticism which is based perhaps as much upon the criteria of nationalism as upon artistic considerations. The creative life, however, has never conformed

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to territorial boundaries. American artists have roamed more widely and been broader in their sympathies than the critics, so that their productions obstinately refuse to fit into the pigeon-holes of critical theory. Perhaps the exhibition of these late works by Copley in Washington may tempt the public to forget critical prejudices and to look at them as the interesting pictures they are.

STONE YOKE OF THE TOTONAC CIVILIZATION

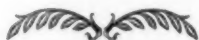
From an article by Marjorie W. Sirich in the *Bulletin of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts*, June, 1942

Little is known concerning the Totonac Indians who inhabited the region of Vera Cruz from about the ninth century, and nothing is certainly known concerning the use of the stone yoke by which their art is now represented in the Institute. To a large extent this example of pre-Spanish sculpture in America can have its own way with the observer. Its enigmatic character in no way detracts from its interest, however. On the contrary, it enhances it, for no one can look at this strange object without being struck by the quality of its workmanship, or without wanting to delve into the history of ancient American art, just now beginning to receive the attention it deserves.

The yoke is fashioned from a magnificently carved piece of hard stone that has been given the shape of an ordinary horse collar. The decoration, extending over the upper and outer surfaces of the stone and around the corners at the ends, consists of a grotesque human figure crouching on the ground and gripping the coiled body of a monster whose jaws are spread wide to hold the head of the man.

The ends of the yoke are finished with a vigorously modeled human head gripped in the jaw of a monster, and the incidental spaces of the surface are filled in with geometric designs. It is not known what, exactly, this decorative scheme is meant to represent, but it may be supposed to be associated in some way with the worship of the earth. That the yoke itself was a funereal object designed to be placed around the head of a corpse seems reasonable in view of its shape and decoration.

The Totonacs, on the evidence of this example, appear to have been gifted sculptors, with a keenly developed sense of design and a vigor in executing it that must have placed them among the great artists of their time.



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